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THE

SOCIETY OF

CLERGY

AND THE SOCIETY OF

MINISTERS OF THE

BY HENRY TUCKER

THE SECOND EDITION

NEW

JOHN L. LEECH, JR. LOW, OCEAN

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1862

THE
PRINCIPLES OF RELIGION,
AS PROFESSED BY THE
SOCIETY OF CHRISTIANS,
USUALLY CALLED
QUAKERS:

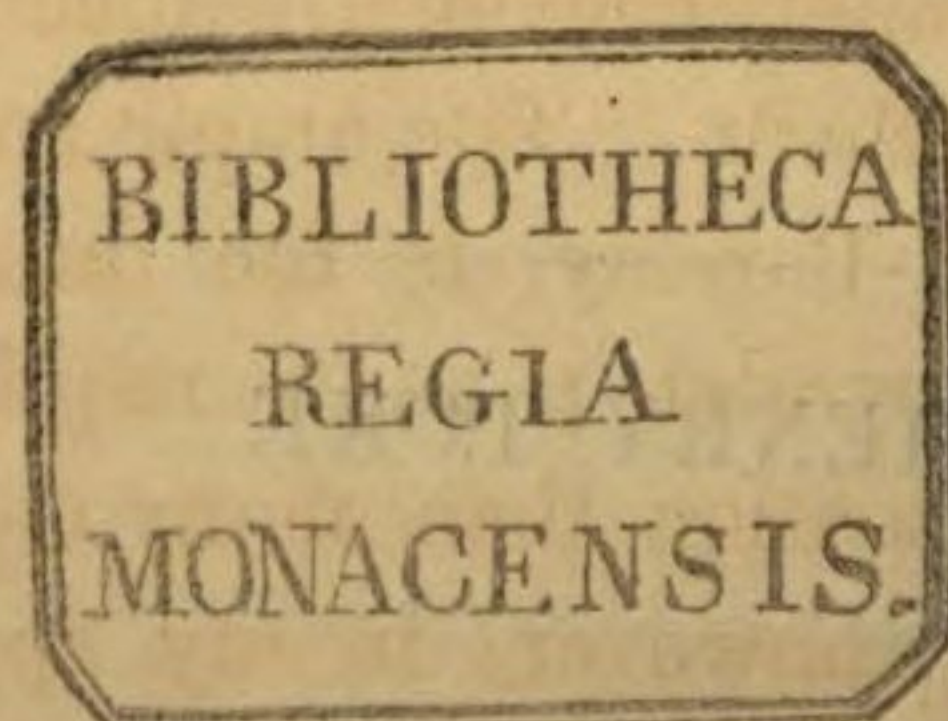
WRITTEN FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF THEIR YOUTH,
AND FOR THE INFORMATION OF STRANGERS.

BY HENRY TUKE.

THE ELEVENTH EDITION.

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INTRODUCTION.

CONSIDERING the many publications which already exist, explanatory of the Principles of our Religious Society, it may seem, to some persons, superfluous to publish anything further on this subject. I have, notwithstanding been long apprehensive, that a work is still wanting, which shall include the whole, or the most material part of our principles; and, in a concise, yet perspicuous manner, convey a sufficient explanation and defence of them. The ample and excellent Apology of Robert Barclay, is too diffuse for the generality of young readers; and it requires a more close and patient attention than many are willing to bestow. It would, however, in my apprehension, amply repay that attention: and I am so far from being desirous to lessen its use, that I wish particularly to recommend it to those of our Society, who desire (what all should desire) thoroughly to understand their own Religious Principles. If the language is not modern, it is still correct and clear; if the work is thought too controversial, we should recollect, that the controversy is on subjects, the right understanding of which is intimately connected with our existence as a Religious Society.

The light and miscellaneous reading of the present day, it is to be feared, disinclines many amongst us as well as others, from subjects which require close attention and serious consideration; and I wish it may not also be a means of weakening the attachment of many, to those religious Truths, in which our highest duty and our deepest interest consist.

In this work, I have been desirous of inculcating the general principles of religion and of Christianity, as well as those which are peculiar to our Society; believing that we can no longer exist, with any degree of consistency, than while those principles are maintained, which constitute the basis of the Christian Religion. These I consider to be, Faith in God, and a belief of the Immortality of the soul; an humbling sense of the depravity of human nature, and of the necessity and benefits of a Redeemer; that this Redeemer is Christ Jesus our Lord; that what the Evangelists and Apostles have written concerning Him, is true, both in relation to his Humanity and his Divinity, as are likewise their accounts of his many mighty works and miracles; his having, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself unto God for us, as a Propitiation for our sins; and sent the Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth, to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and to guide into all Truth.

In treating of the Holy Scriptures, I have particularly endeavoured to obviate the principal objections made against them; since it is by attempting to invalidate their authenticity and Divine authority, that the enemies of the Christian religion attack our faith. I have introduced the subject of the Scriptures, previously to the Chapter on the Christian

Religion; considering, that if the authenticity and veracity, to say nothing of the Divine authority, of these writings be established, it is then necessary only to show, what Christianity is, according to the Scriptures: a few arguments are, however, added, in support of the Christian Religion.

With respect to those principles which are peculiar to our Religious Society, I hope that, however, singular they may appear to some, they will, on close examination, be found consistent with the nature and spirit of the Gospel Dispensation. The conviction of this consistency has been increased on my mind, by the investigation which the writing of this work has occasioned; and, I trust, we are able to give such reasons for our dissent from other Christians, as may, at least, excuse it to those from whom we differ.

Although very little is quoted in this work from any books, but those of the Holy Scriptures, it may be proper to say, that I am indebted to the writings of others, for many of the arguments which I have advanced. At a time when so much has been written, and well written on these subjects, it is not to be expected that many fresh arguments can be brought forward. Some new matter will, nevertheless, be found. The principal object aimed at in this work is, to digest what has been produced by reading and reflection, and to deliver it in such a manner, as may briefly, yet clearly, convey the sentiments designed to be inculcated. How far this object has been attained, is not for me to determine.

I wish not, by any thing which I have written, to promote a spirit of controversy. On the contrary, I desire the increase of that mutual charity, which it

is alike our duty and our interest to cherish. To speak what we apprehend to be truth, is, however, sometimes necessary; and always so, if we speak at all. If we do this, as we ought to do, in love; and if what we say is received in the same spirit, we may be the means of stirring up the pure mind in each other; and of promoting our “growing up in Him, in all things, who is the Head, even Christ.” *

* Ephesians iv. 15.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

ON RELIGION IN GENERAL.

Universal importance of Religion.—The belief of a God its first principle.—The next, that of the immortality of the soul.—Universality of these principles.—Arguments for them.—Faith their best support..... 13

CHAPTER II.

ON THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

Nature and design of the Scriptures.—Their claim to our regard, and to the belief of their being Divinely Inspired.—Objections answered—first, to their genuineness and truth—next, to their Inspiration.—All related of good men not intended for imitation—Impartiality of the Scriptures.—Great judgment necessary in applying them.—Possibility of placing too much dependence on them.—On calling them the Word of God 17

CHAPTER III.

ON THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

The fall of man and the promise of a Redeemer.—Different modes of Divine communication to man.—Prospects and prophecies of the Gospel day.—Christ comes among the Jews.—The benefits of his coming designed to be universal.—Objects of his coming recapitulated.—Christian redemption a work of love.—Divinity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit.—On the Trinity.—Justification.—Resurrection.—Arguments and evidences of Christianity.—The true and perfect Christian .. 40

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The gift of the Spirit an essential of Christianity.—Different names for the Spirit.—Necessity of its assistance—universally afforded—and in all ages—but most plentifully in the Gospel.—Unconditional election and reprobation disowned and disproved 57

CHAPTER V.

ON DIVINE WORSHIP AND GOSPEL MINISTRY.

Worship an act of the soul towards God.—Meetings for worship may be held in silence.—Public worship an indispensable duty—reasonable and beneficial.—Silent worship adapted to all states.—Its advantages.—Scripture arguments for it.—Prayer a necessary duty.—The qualifications of ministers.—Human learning not essential to the ministry.—No individual has a right exclusively to assume the exercise of it.—On women's preaching.—On preaching for hire.—Tithes... 73

CHAPTER VI.

ON BAPTISM AND THE SUPPER.

Preliminary observations.—Two kinds of baptism—Water and the Spirit.—Remarks on Matt. xxviii. 19.—This and other arguments in favour of Water Baptism.—Sprinkling not baptism.—Sprinkling of infants not authorized by Scripture.—Circumstances attending it highly objectionable.—The Lord's Supper.—The circumstances related on this subject fully admitted.—Not considered perpetual, any more than washing of feet.—The true Lord's Supper.—Our dissent on these subjects not from disesteem of Christianity, but the reverse... 96

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE OF DAYS AND TIMES.

Exemption from censure claimed for their non-observance.—
 The observance of them disapproved by the apostle Paul.—More
 injurious than beneficial to religion—especially festivals.—
 Setting apart one day in the week approved.—On public fasts,
 &c.—Conclusion from Rom. xiv. 5, &c..... 115

CHAPTER VIII.

ON OATHS AND WAR.

Quotations from Matt. v.—Oaths unnecessary.—Arguments
 in favour of them answered.—Arguments in favour of war
 answered.—The Christian religion the only remedy for this
 evil..... 119

CHAPTER IX.

ON AMUSEMENTS.

General remarks on them.—Rules respecting them.—On
 dancing and Music.—Necessity of properly regulating amuse-
 ments for youth.—Propriety of avoiding temptation..... 132

CHAPTER X.

ON DRESS AND ADDRESS.

Our principle for regulating dress.—Scripture passages in
 support of it.—An objection answered.—Non-conformity to the
 world, to be accompanied with the transformation of the mind.—
 Our peculiarities of address supported by reason, by propriety,
 and by religion.—On not taking off the hat.—Custom too much
 admitted in the conduct of Christians..... 135

CHAPTER XI.

ON CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

—Peaceableness of our principles a security to Government.—
 Duties of subjects.—Suffering peaceably submitted to, when
 active compliance cannot be conscientiously rendered.—Civil
 and religious liberty valued, and how best defended. 143

CHAPTER XII.

ON DISCIPLINE.

The necessity of discipline in religious societies.—Objections
 to it answered.—Particular objects of our discipline enumerated.
 —Different meetings in which it is transacted.—Importance of
 transacting it in a right spirit. 147

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CONCLUSION.

Address to the Youth on the remembrance of their Creator.
 —Reason and Revelation.—The Holy Scriptures and Christi-
 anity.—On our peculiar principles.—On the necessity of regen-
 eration.—Address to persons not of our religious persuasion. 156

PRINCIPLES OF RELIGION.

Chapter I.

ON RELIGION IN GENERAL.

Universal Importance of Religion.—The belief of God its first Principle.—The next that of the Immortality of the Soul.—Universality of these Principles.—Arguments for them.—Faith their best support.

RELIGION is a subject which involves so much, both of the duty and interest of mankind, that there is no situation in life, which can exempt from the considerations and obligations it imposes on all men ; or render superfluous those sources of enjoyment and consolation, which it affords to its true and humble possessors.

The first principle of religion is, the belief of a Supreme Being, distinguished by the name of GOD ; a Being, who is the Original Creator of all things ; who hath all power in his hands ; who is perfect in wisdom and knowledge ; who is just and equal in all his ways ; and whose tender mercies are over all his works. He knoweth our most secret actions, words, and thoughts ; for there is nothing hid from “ Him, with whom we have to do.”

The next principle of religion is, the belief of the immortality of the soul, and of a future

state of rewards and punishments, in which the great distinction will be made between the righteous and the wicked; those inequalities which appear in this probationary state will be removed; and a recompense given to every man according to his works.

Although these principles of religion are not attended with that kind of evidence, which the objects of our external senses generally afford; yet it is not a little remarkable, that there are scarcely any other subjects, which have obtained such general belief and persuasion amongst mankind; though often mixed with many gross ideas. They are principles so interwoven with our natures, that it seems to indicate an extraordinary debasement, or perversion of mind, not to entertain truths so universally felt and acknowledged. They are, however, principles which may be supported by arguments, drawn from the nature of things; and, notwithstanding the general consent to them, it may be proper to bring forward a few of these arguments.

The existence of a Supreme Being, the Creator of heaven and earth, is evident from the works of creation. The magnificence of some of these works; the regularity and order with which they move in their appointed stations; the beauty and use attendant upon others, with the important purposes which are accomplished by them, particularly to the animal creation; evince so clearly both design and

power, as to afford an insuperable argument in favour of a GREAT FIRST CAUSE, perfect in wisdom and goodness, as well as unlimited in power. To these considerations may be added, the wonderful arrangement of the animal economy. The different parts adapted to their different purposes with peculiar exactness and advantage, might well induce the pious Psalmist to address his Maker in this emphatic language: “I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well.”* Thus also a consideration of the other works of creation, induced the same Psalmist to celebrate his Maker’s praise: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech; and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.”† And again: “O Lord! how manifold are thy works; in wisdom hast Thou made them all!”‡

Nor are we without arguments for our immortality, and a future state of retribution; the belief of which is, as it were, the soul of religion: for, when we have entertained suitable

* Psalm cxxxix. 14.

† Psalm xix. 1, 2, 3.)

‡ Psalm civ. 24. If any person should think it irregular, to bring forward passages from the Scriptures, before their authority has been proved; it may be observed that these passages are not advanced as arguments, but as elucidations, in the same manner as any other writing might be quoted.

ideas of a Supreme Being ; when we feel those aspirations unto Him, and those desires to unite with Him, which frequently arise in our hearts ; and particularly when we look at the state of the righteous and the wicked in this world ; we have sufficient reason to conclude, that there is a part in man which is immortal ; and that there must be a future state, in which virtue and vice will meet with their respective rewards, in a more signal manner than they appear to receive them in this life ; thus showing that God is just and equal in all his ways, and righteous in all his thoughts.

But, notwithstanding these and other arguments, which might be adduced in support of those two first principles of religion, the soul seems most fully to rest upon and enjoy them, when they are felt as objects of faith, rather than of reason. They then become like self-evident truths, of which our own feelings are the best support, and which act in concert with that declaration : “ Without faith it is impossible to please Him ; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is ; and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” * And we ought ever to remember, after all our reasonings on these subjects, that “ Life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel.” †

* Heb. xi. 6.

† 2 Tim. i. 10.

Chapter II.

ON THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

Nature and design of the Scriptures.—Their claim to our regard, and to the belief of their being Divinely inspired—Objections answered—first to their Genuineness and Truth—next to their Inspiration.—All related of good men not intended for imitation.—Impartiality of the Scriptures.—Great judgment necessary in applying them.—Possibility of placing too much dependence on them.—On calling them the Word of God.

THESE writings are divided into two parts, the Old and the New Testaments. They commence with an account of the Creation of the world, and contain a history of more than four thousand years. Their object appears to be, to exhibit the various dispensations of God to mankind; to manifest many of his general and particular acts of Providence; to show the good effects of religion and virtue; and to set forth the lamentable evils, which are the consequence of walking in the paths of irreligion and profaneness. For the prevention of these evils, the Scriptures inculcate those principles of piety and morality, which contribute to the happiness of mankind, both here and hereafter; and there is not any general duty, religious or moral, in which they do not afford instruction and direction.

The Scriptures also contain many remarkable predictions concerning nations and individuals, with several prophecies of the coming of the

Messiah, and of the dispensation of the Gospel. Ancient history, both sacred and profane, gives account of circumstances, which show the fulfilling of many of these predictions; and the New Testament particularly relates the completion of those, which are given concerning “Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets did write.” *

When we consider who were the writers of these volumes; what are the subjects, and what appear to be the objects of them, they claim, at first view, a high degree of regard and esteem. But when, as Christians, we believe in a Divine Influence and direction, we find abundant cause to conclude, that this Influence was extended to those who wrote or compiled the Scriptures; and therefore believe with the apostle Paul, that they were “given by Inspiration of God;” † and are productive of those important advantages which he attaches to them.

But, notwithstanding the strong belief which is generally entertained of the truth of these writings, and of their having been communicated under the influence of Divine Inspiration, there are persons who do not acknowledge one or both of these claims, to that credibility and reverence which are attached to the Scriptures. It will therefore be necessary to pay some attention to the objections advanced by these persons; in

* John i. 45.

† 2 Tim. iii. 16.

doing which, it may be proper first to consider those which are made against the authenticity of the Scriptures.

These objections may be divided into two classes.

1. To the writings, as the genuine productions of the authors to whom they are ascribed.

2. To the works themselves, as being a true history.

With respect to the objection against their being genuine, in relation to their imputed authors, if it could in some cases be well supported, it would by no means invalidate either the truth or the Inspirations of these writings ; because the books do not always declare their authors. They have, however, been transmitted through so regular a channel of evidence, by a people for whom they were especially written, and by whom they were religiously preserved, as to render their being written by those to whom they are ascribed, as indubitable as any thing of the kind can be. In some cases the authors may be considered as dubious ; and seeing that, in these instances, the books are not imputed in Scripture to any individual, no objection can reasonably be made on this ground.

An objection is sometimes made to the supposed author, on account of his speaking of himself in the third person ; but this cannot

have much weight, when it is considered that it is a mode of writing not peculiar to the Scriptures, but one which has been adopted by various historians, whose works have been generally admitted without disputation.

Another more plausible reason for disputing the authors, arises from some places being mentioned by names, which appear to have been given to them subsequent to the alleged writer's existence ; or from saying, that a place is called by a particular name "to this day," with other similar expressions. Now all this is easily obviated by considering what is generally admitted, that, after the Babylonian captivity, Ezra revised the Jewish Scriptures ; and it appears, that, in some instances, he either made use of modern names, or added remarks of his own to elucidate the history. He was a religious character, and one whom the Jews considered as acting under Divine direction ; they therefore received his comments, and added them, if he did not do it himself to the original text. This is a fact which the Jews acknowledge ; and which accounts for the causes of this objection in such a manner, as must, I apprehend, be satisfactory to every impartial mind.

The account of the death of Moses, at the end of Deuteronomy, was probably added by Joshua or Samuel, to complete the history of Moses, in those books that were written by him ; and

is a circumstance which no reasonable man, who is acquainted with literary publications, would make a ground of objection to the authenticity of any book.

Nor are the objections to the truth of the matters related in the Holy Scriptures, of more weight than those alledged against their authenticity. They arise from some apparent inconsistencies of one part with another, and from a supposed difference, in some instances, from other histories.

In most cases, the inconsistencies objected are only in appearance; they may be, and indeed have been, removed by a critical examination of the subjects; and if we admit a few to have arisen from incorrectness in transcribers or translators, surely no wise man would consider such a circumstance as a reasonable ground, for rejecting even writings much less authenticated than these. As to the few variations from other writers, if they cannot otherwise be reconciled, a fair consideration of the probability, which of them had the best means of information, will, I believe, give a clear preference to the Sacred historian. But the Scriptures are, in general, found to be well supported by other authors; and it is worthy of observation, that the completion of prophecies recorded in various parts of Holy Writ, is confirmed by profane historians of good credit, who, it must be admitted, could have no

inducement to give any unfair testimony in their favour.*

That some verbal difficulties should occur in a collection of books, which were written from more than one thousand seven hundred, to upwards of three thousand years ago, and which contains a history of about four thousand years, is what may reasonably be expected; but that writings of such antiquity should come down to us so perfect as they appear to be, is cause of admiration; and, considering their interesting importance, of gratitude and praise.

Having, I hope, sufficiently obviated the most plausible objections, that are made against the truth and credibility of the Scriptures, the next circumstance to be considered is their Inspiration; by which I understand, that the writers or compilers were influenced by the Holy Spirit in communicating these writings. A considerable part of them, are given as express communications from the Almighty, to his servants and prophets: this if we admit the truth of the relation, determines a large proportion of the Bible to be an Immediate Revelation; which is more, as to the degree, than is necessarily implied by the term Inspiration.

The reasons for considering these writings, as

* For the truth of these assertions, see Grotius on the Truth of the Christian Religion, Book I. Sect. 16; Newton on the Prophecies; and Tomline on the Study of the Bible.

being given under that Divine Influence which is called Inspiration, are the following :

1.—The characters of the writers; all of whom, that we can ascertain, were men eminently endowed with Divine gifts; and who appear to have drawn up these writings for the use and edification of the Church of God; in doing which we may reasonably conclude, that His assistance would be sought for and afforded.

2.—The character of Ezra; who, besides being the writer of at least one book, collected the various writings of the Old Testament, with the exception of two or three books not then written.* His character, gifts, and motives, all lead us to the same conclusion as before; with this addition, that as the occasion, or the authors of some part of these writings, are not clearly ascertained, Ezra's compilation, under Divine Influence, gives an additional sanction to these books.

3.—The testimony of the apostle Paul, who says: “ All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and† is profitable for doctrine,” &c.

* These are Nehemiah and Malachi, and perhaps Esther, with part of Chronicles. They are generally supposed to have been added by Simon the Just.

I am aware, that some persons endeavour to set aside the force of this passage, by stating that one Greek manuscript omits the *καί*, in English *and*, and that some ancient Versions have no word equivalent to it; by which they would give a different meaning to the passage. In answer to this it may be observed :—

When we consider the opportunities and abilities of the apostle, for judging in such a case, (to say nothing of his own Inspiration,) his

1.—That for one Greek manuscript which wants the *καί*, or *and*, there are great numbers which have it; and that one is neither so ancient, nor of so good a credit as most of the others, in the opinion of many critics. Now, to set all other manuscripts aside, and prefer a single and less authenticated reading, with two or three translations, which though they may be ancient, can by no means be considered of equal validity with so many copies in the original tongue, would be an exercise of criticism, which nothing but a partial predilection, to a preconceived opinion would adopt. Would these critics admit such arguments in favour of the authenticity of 1 John, v. 7?

2.—The context requires a sense, which implies that the apostle considered that all which he had just called the Holy Scriptures were inspired. Ancient commentators, even those who have made use of the versions which have not the *and*, still consider the passage as implying that the whole Scripture was Divinely inspired. So that, supposing (what however is not admitted) that the *καί* was not in the original, the sense is still the same. For the more clear elucidation of the subject, let us read the whole passage, as these objectors would render it: “From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture, (or every writing,) given by Inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God, may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

Now, every one that reads this passage impartially, and considers the construction of the sentences correctly, must, I apprehend, admit that the Holy Scriptures, mentioned in the beginning of the paragraph, are included in the general observations respecting “All Scripture given by Inspiration,” or that “All Scriptures given by Inspiration,” only alluded to “The Holy Scriptures” mentioned just before. In either case the inference is clear, that the Scriptures of the Old Testament,

testimony appears to be an insurmountable argument in favour of those writings, concerning which he made this declaration.

which were all that were then called the Holy Scriptures, were considered by the apostle as Divinely Inspired; and as answering to the character he gives in the 16th verse. It may be further observed, that without the *καί*, the passage may be translated thus: "All (or the whole) Scripture being Divinely inspired, is profitable," &c. Even the Latin Vulgate, which is one of the versions brought forward as favouring the omission, of the *and*, will bear this rendering: "Omnis scriptura, divinitus inspirata, utilis est," &c.

3.—The sense is, however, more clear and unequivocal, by the well supported reading of the word *καί*, or *and*, as given in our translation. This sense contains the reason why the Holy Scriptures were able to make Timothy wise unto salvation; but suppose the meaning simply to be, that all Scripture which is Divinely inspired, is profitable, &c., without any connexion with the preceding verse, the position would become an unconnected truism; as no doubt could be entertained that all Scripture, which was Divinely inspired, was thus profitable. Besides, this meaning would leave Timothy, and every other reader, in uncertainty, which part of the Scripture was, and which was not Inspired; it offers no rule to distinguish them. But had this been the apostle's meaning, there was a fair occasion, and indeed a call upon him, to offer some means of distinction.

From all these considerations, I am induced to believe, that the construction given by our translators, is supportable, not only by all the Greek manuscripts, but by the just rules of criticism; and by every other reasonable consideration of which the subject is capable. See this matter further discussed by Findlay, on the Inspiration of the Jewish Scriptures, in answer to Dr. Geddes.

For the sake of some of my readers, it may be proper to take notice of an objection, which has been made from Robert Barclay having, in his apology, quoted the passage without the *and*: "All Scripture given by Inspiration of God, is profitable," &c. In answer to this, it may be observed, that Robert

4.—Although the latter arguments are applicable only to the Old Testament; yet the first relates to both; and it is presumed that none, but Jews, who acknowledge the Inspiration of the Old Testament, will deny it to the New. The exception which the apostle Paul makes in an instance or two, to his writing by commandment, is a proof of his writings at least being Divinely Inspired.

After giving these reasons, I shall proceed to consider the principal objections, to this Inspiration, which I apprehend to be :

1.—That some of the matters related, are of too trivial a nature to be the subjects of Divine Inspiration.

2.—That some others appear so inconsistent with the nature of the Divine Being, as to render it altogether improbable, that He ever warranted what is there expressed.

With respect to the first objection, I believe

Barclay originally wrote and published his Apology in Latin, and I believe generally quoted the texts of Scripture from the Latin Vulgate, of which this is a translation. Even supposing him to have preferred this rendering, yet, if we may judge from what he has written on the Scriptures, there is no reason to believe he doubted the Inspiration of any part of them. He begins his Thesis on the Scriptures thus : “ From these revelations of the Spirit of God to the saints, have proceeded the Scriptures of Truth ;” and this he applies to the historical as well as the prophetic, doctrinal, and exhortatory parts of the Old and New Testaments.

It is hoped that the importance of the subject of this note, will excuse its length. To have incorporated it into the body of the work, would not have been so suitable for many readers.

we are by no means competent judges. The Old Testament, to which this objection may be principally made, was not primarily written for us of the present day ; but for a people, who had many peculiar customs and ceremonies, and to whom many things might be important, that to us may appear of a trifling nature. Nor is it improbable, that much of what these objectors consider as trifling, may, to others of their contemporaries, be both important and instructive. The pious and humble mind will often derive instruction from many of the works of Divine Providence, which may be overlooked by the vain and fastidious, as not worthy of their notice.

The second objection, it is apprehended, is meant principally to apply to those passages in the Old Testament, where the Almighty is represented as authorising the destruction of man by man. This is an objection not only to the Inspiration, but to the truth of the Scriptures ; and though it appears to be the strong hold of the enemies of the Bible, it is by no means impregnable. It has, indeed, been often attacked and reduced ; but such is their fondness for it, that they are continually rebuilding it, and resorting to it.

In replying to this objection, it may be proper, first, to consider the command of God to Abraham, to offer up his son Isaac, which has been much insisted on, as favouring human

sacrifices, and as an argument against the Scriptures. It stands recorded as a trial of Abraham's faith; and as, after his full resignation, his hand was stayed from the performance of the act, I am at a loss to conceive what inference can be drawn from this circumstance, derogatory to the character of the Divine Being, or of those writings which represent Him as putting the righteous patriarch's love and obedience to this great trial. Had the sacrifice been actually made, the objection to it might have had more appearance of validity; but as the case is represented, and no doubt rightly represented, it appears to afford an argument against, rather than for, human sacrifices. The conduct of Abraham is mentioned, in both the Old and New Testaments, with the most marked approbation: and it has obtained for the obedient patriarch, the distinguished character of "the Friend of God."*

The command given to the Israelites, to make war on the Canaanites, and to destroy them, is an objection, which it is difficult to conceive can be seriously urged, by those who consider war to be lawful, even under the Christian Dispensation. War is generally allowed to be one of those judgments, by which Divine Providence hath often afflicted a guilty nation; and, in the instances on which the

* James ii. 23.

objection is founded, this appears to have been remarkably the case. They were indeed judgments which had been mercifully protracted. Thus we read that the possession of the promised land by Abraham or his posterity, was deferred for several generations, because “the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full;”^{*} although there is reason to believe from this expression, as well as from other circumstances, that their sins were then very great.

This is further elucidated by the command given to the Israelites, to abstain from many evil practices, (some of them of the grossest kind,) of which the nations whom they were to expel were guilty. These Moses plainly mentions as the cause of their expulsion; warning the Israelites at the same time against similar conduct, which would produce similar judgments: “Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things; for in all these the nations are defiled, which I cast out before you. And the land is defiled; therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it; and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; that the land spue not you out also, when you defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you.”[†]

^{*} Gen. xv. 16.

[†] Lev. xviii. 24—26, 28.

This subject is also placed in a clear and forcible point of view by the remonstrance of Moses, as related in the ninth chapter of Deuteronomy; where, after cautioning the people against any presumptuous conceits of their own merits, he expressly says to them: “Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thy heart, dost thou go to possess their land; but for the wickedness of these nations, the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.”*

The case of Agag has also been brought forward to support the objection, which we have now under consideration; but in this instance, we have again a cause assigned for the judgment executed: “As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women.”† From this expression there is reason to suppose, that Agag had been remarkable for his violence and cruelty, which justly brought this judgment upon him.

It has been alleged, that these pretensions to Divine commands were only a cloak for ambition and cruelty. But this cannot reasonably be supposed to be the case, when it is considered that these judgments were not confined to the heathen nations; but that similar ones were also threatened and executed upon the Israelites themselves. Although they were a

* Deut. ix. 5.

† 1 Sam. xv. 23.

people distinguished by many peculiar favours ; yet, when they departed from the law and commandment of their God, and degenerated into idolatry and wickedness, they became the subjects of Divine retribution. Thus the prophet Isaiah expostulates with them: “ Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers ? Did not the Lord, He against whom we have sinned ? For they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law ; therefore He hath poured upon them the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle.”* Even Moses, their leader in these supposed schemes of ambition, denounced, in the most ample manner, the judgments, which would be the consequence of their disobedience to the law of their God.—See *Lev.* xxvi. 14, &c. *Deut.* xxviii. 15, &c.

When we consider the peculiar humility and disinterestedness of Moses, in refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter ; in the great reluctance with which he accepted the government of the Israelites ; in preferring their forgiveness and preservation to his own aggrandizement, or that of his family ; and in the singular liberality which he manifested, when Eldad and Medad were complained of for prophesying in the camp : when these circumstances are considered, there seems no ground whatever

* Isaiah xliii. 24, 25.

to suspect Moses of either ambition or cruelty. We perceive, on the contrary, the propriety of the distinguished character given of him, most probably by some pious transcriber of the Pentateuch: "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which lived on the face of the earth." *

In considering the various circumstances connected with this subject, there appears to be abundant cause to acknowledge that the Lord's ways are equal; and that those judgments upon the Canaanites were not the exercise of a capricious severity, but were administered under circumstances which perfectly reconcile them to those principles of justice and mercy, which we consider among the most distinguished attributes of Deity. And though, in many instances, the innocent may seem to suffer equally with the guilty; yet this is no more than is generally the case in other public calamities. Even in those most remarkable ones, the universal deluge, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, many innocent children must have suffered with their guilty parents. In considering these cases, we should remember, that whatever public afflictions may be directed for the punishment of nations, it is to a future life that we must look for the grand distinction between individuals; when God

* Numbers xii. 3.

will render to every man according to his deeds." *

If some of those, who with myself, consider war altogether inconsistent with the Christian Dispensation, should argue from the unchangeableness of the Divine nature, that the Almighty could not allow of, or enjoin practices, in one age which are inconsistent in another; it may and ought to be observed, that in his dispensations to mankind, great variety is evident; and many things which were not only allowed, but commanded, in former times and under different circumstances, would now be improper.

It also appears, that when our blessed Lord set forth the peaceableness of the Gospel Dispensation, He showed that a contrary conduct had been more than permitted in former times; and unless we intend to controvert the propriety of the manner, in which the Author of the Christian religion propagated it, we must allow that there have been times, in which divers things were lawful that are now unlawful; and thus we may reconcile the consistency of the Jewish wars with the Divine will. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you Resist not evil." Again, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine

* Romans ii. 6.

enemy;* but I say unto you, Love your enemies," &c.† Now, when we consider the expressions just cited, and observe the obvious difference they make between the dispensations of the Law and of the Gospel; we may find abundant reason to believe, that it was not inconsistent with the Divine nature and will, to command those things which are related respecting the wars of the Jews.

If any credibility is due to the writings of Moses, (and they have all the claim to credibility which writings of that antiquity well can have,) it is evident that those wars were commanded by the Almighty. And when we consider, that we have no less support for the authority of Moses than our Lord himself; that He and his apostles mention him with evident tokens of their considering him Divinely directed; we must, in denying the authority of Moses, also deny that of Christ and his apostles:—a consequence, from the idea of which every Christian must revolt.

Let us, therefore, be content with that evidence of the Divine will, which is afforded us; and rather than impugn the former

* The words, "hate thine enemy," do not appear in the Old Testament; perhaps they were added by the scribes as a gloss; however, our Lord, by his rectical, acknowledges them as not inconsistent with the former Dispensation.

† Matt. v. 38, 39. 43, 44.

dispensations of God to mankind, be thankful to Him for having introduced one so much more excellent, in which—"Glory to God in the highest," is peculiarly united with—"Peace on earth and good will to men."

But whilst I have been endeavouring to remove these objections, I have regretted that there should be any necessity thus to justify the ways of God to men," as recorded in Holy Writ, and to endeavour to support the cause of that Omnipotent Being, whose prerogative alone it is—"That He giveth no account of any of his matters." He has, notwithstanding, as far as different circumstances will permit, condescended to adapt his dispensations towards mankind, to those principles of wisdom, justice, and mercy, which are the rules of our conduct towards each other. If, in some instances, we cannot perceive this consistency, the infinite disparity between the Divine Being and his creature man, might reasonably induce us to expect difficulties of this kind; and surely the wisdom is no more to be admired than the faith, of those who reject every thing respecting an Infinite Being, that does not comport with their finite capacities. "Canst thou, by searching, find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know; The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. If

He cut off, and shut up, and gather together, then who can hinder Him?"*

But, in admitting the Holy Scriptures to have been communicated to us under Divine Influence or Inspiration, it is not necessary to consider all that is related in them, concerning even those whose general conduct might entitle them to the character of good men, as intended for our imitation. In many instances, indeed, their conduct is very properly and impartially censured; and this impartiality constitutes one of the many excellencies of the Bible. But there are also circumstances simply related without any comment, which it is by no means requisite to consider as related with approbation, or authorizing a similar conduct in us. A close and critical examination of some of these cases, would probably remove much of the impression which a slighter consideration may have sometimes produced. At any rate, neither the sacred historian, nor that Inspiration under which he is supposed to have written, is chargeable with such circumstances.—Here, however, we have again occasion for the exercise of our gratitude, in that it has pleased Divine Providence to give us an existence under a dispensation, which requires singular degrees of purity and uprightness of conduct; and which exceeds all former ones in the excellence of its

* Job xi. 7.

morality, as well as in the peculiar peaceableness of its principles, and the spirituality of its worship.

Great judgment is also necessary in applying the Scriptures to the support of religious doctrines and observances. These have been, I apprehend, sometimes adopted from what may be incidentally mentioned, rather than inculcated. In considering the Scriptures, and endeavouring to build systems upon them, it requires great care to distinguish those things which are universal and essential, from such as are only of a temporary or local nature. For want of an attention of this kind, many unprofitable disputes, (to say no worse of them,) have arisen among the professors of Christianity; and much unnecessary stress has been laid on things which the Christian religion does not enjoin or require.

Highly, however, as these writings are to be valued, and highly indeed do we esteem them! there is not only a possibility, but a danger of placing too much dependence upon them, by preferring them to that Divine Spirit from which they proceed, to which they direct our attention, and by which only they can be rightly opened to our understandings. Thus the Jews, in the days of our blessed Saviour's personal appearance on earth, paid great attention to the Scriptures; and at the same time did not believe in Him, "of whom Moses in the Law, and the

prophets did write.” On this account our Lord reproves them in this manner: “Search (or, ye search) the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me; and ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life.” Now, that from which the Scriptures proceeded, and to which they amply bear witness as the means of salvation, is what we apprehend there is a danger of neglecting; and thereby of dwelling upon the letter, without a proper regard to the Spirit; a danger against which the Scriptures themselves contain many salutary cautions.

There is also a name by which the Holy Scriptures are frequently distinguished, which appears to be, in divers respects, exceptionable, namely: “The Word of God.” This is an appellation which is otherwise applied in those writings; and it tends to create a confusion of ideas, unnecessarily to denominate several subjects by the same name. Christ is called, “The Word of God.”* The term† is also applied to that holy Principle or Spirit, by which He carries on the work of salvation in the hearts of true Christians; and frequently to the preaching of the Gospel; but by applying it to the Sacred Writings, a misapplication of passages in them is frequently occasioned. That these writings contain the WORDS of God, we readily admit:

* John i. 1, &c. Rev. xix. 13.

† Heb. iv. 12. 1 Pet. i. 23. 1 John ii. 14.

but we think it safest, as well as most proper, to designate them by that appellation by which the apostle Paul has distinguished them ; and, by way of priority to all other writings, to style them, The Holy Scriptures. Concerning these writings we believe with this apostle, that they were “ given by inspiration of God ; and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness ; that the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” *

* 2 Tim. iii. 16.

Chapter III.

ON THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

The Fall of Man, and the Promise of a Redeemer.—Different modes of Divine communication to Man.—Prospects and Prophecies of the Gospel Day.—Christ comes among the Jews.—The benefits of his coming designed to be universal.—Objects of his coming recapitulated.—Christian redemption a work of love.—Divinity of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit.—On the Trinity—Justification—Resurrection.—Arguments and evidences of Christianity.—The true and perfect Christian.

HAVING vindicated the truth and Divine authority of the Scriptures, we next proceed to consider the most important doctrines of the Christian religion.

Man having, by disobedience to the Divine command, lost that state of innocence and purity in which he was originally created ; and having thereby subjected himself and his offspring to sin and misery ; it pleased his gracious and merciful Creator, in the riches of his love, early to point out and promise a Redeemer. This was done at the very time when sentence was pronounced on our first parents for their transgression ; for then their tempter and seducer received this judgment : “ I will put enmity between thee and the woman ; and between thy seed and her Seed : it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.” *

* Gen. iii. 15.

But, notwithstanding the promise was thus early made, many ages elapsed before it pleased God completely to fulfil it: during which time, however, He did not leave mankind wholly to themselves; but by the ministration of angels, by that Holy Spirit which was more plentifully to be poured forth in the Christian Dispensation, and by other means, He communicated his will to the children of men; striving with, and reproofing the ungodly because of their iniquities, as well as exhorting and comforting the righteous under those trials, to which this probationary state, and, in some instances, the love and the fear of their God, rendered them liable. Typical offerings and sacrifices for sin were also established, in allusion to that One offering, by which “He hath now perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” *

Among other sources of consolation, was the prospect, which was at times given to the patriarchs and prophets, of the day of Christ, and of the excellence of his dispensation; concerning which we have many predictions left upon record, abundantly setting forth those advantages which were designed to mankind by Him, whom we have represented to us as the Sent of the Father. By these prophecies, as well as by the types of the Mosaic law, the minds of many

* Heb. x. 14.

were gradually prepared for the reception of the promised Messiah; and many there appear to have been, who with Simeon and Anna, “waited, for the consolation of Israel, and looked for redemption in Jerusalem,”* by the coming of Him, who was peculiarly prophesied of, as “A light to lighten the Gentiles;” as well as for “The glory of his people Israel.”†

Thus, “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law,”‡ from those ceremonious observances, which were designed to be as a “Schoolmaster to bring them to Christ.”§ Yet the great object of Christ’s coming was by no means confined to the Jewish people; amongst whom and by whom, He suffered that ignominious death, by which it hath pleased God, (and surely it ought to suffice us that it hath thus pleased Him,) “to reconcile all things to Himself.”||

The evangelical prophet, about seven hundred years before our Saviour’s personal appearance on earth, speaking in the name of the Almighty, declares: “It is a light thing that Thou shouldst be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayst be my salvation unto the end of the

* Luke ii. 25, 38.

† Isa. xlii. 6. Luke ii. 32.

‡ Gal. iv. 4.

§ Gal. iii. 24.

|| Col. i. 20.

earth.”* Consonant with this gracious prediction, are these declarations of the apostle John: “In Him was life; and the life was the Light of men.” “That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”† “He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”‡ Many are the prophecies concerning the universal extent of the benefits of Christ’s coming, the accomplishment of which is fully borne witness to by the writers of the New Testament. This is particularly and frequently done by Paul, who being in an especial manner the apostle of the Gentiles, has abundantly set forth, “That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel.”§ Thus was broken down that partition wall, which formerly existed between Jews and Gentiles; all were united in one common cause; and all had an equal interest in Him, with whom “There is neither Greek nor Jew; circumcision nor uncircumcision; Barbarian, Scythian; bond nor free; male nor female; but Christ is all, and in all; and all are one in Christ.”||

From what has already been expressed, it appears evident that the love of God, in sending his Son into the world, was not limited to

* Isaiah xlix. 6.

† John i. 4, 9.

‡ 1 John ii. 2.

§ Ephes. iii. 6.

|| Col. iii. 11. Gal. iii. 28.

any part of it ; but that the benefits were designed to extend as far as the effects of Adam's transgression. This the apostle shows in the 5th chapter of the epistle to the Romans ; and in another epistle, speaking of the resurrection of the dead, he asserts : that, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."* It affords one of the most encouraging considerations, that these benefits are thus unlimited ; and that, through the propitiatory Sacrifice of our blessed Redeemer, and by that Spirit, the more plentiful effusion of which He hath purchased for mankind, the advantages resulting from his death may be received, even by those, whose situation may deprive them of the opportunity of an external knowledge of the truths of the Gospel.

Unless we admit this, we shall greatly contract the benefits of Christ's coming. He "tasted death for every man."† His "Light lighteth every man that cometh into the world."‡ And although the outward knowledge of these Gospel truths may be withheld from many, yet their operation is not therefore necessarily frustrated. How many partake of favours of which they cannot trace the cause ! He, who is not willing that any should perish, has doubtless provided means by which the state of perdition may be avoided, even by those to whom his

* 1 Cor. 15, 22.

† Heb. ii. 9.

‡ John i. 9.

Providence has not afforded opportunities to obtain an historical knowledge of the truths of Christianity. Those, however, who are in possession of this knowledge, cannot be too thankful for it; in that they are enabled to draw nigh unto God with more full assurance of faith; and, confiding in their blessed Redeemer, are encouraged, under their various conflicts and exercises, to look unto Him who is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,”* and “is able to succour those that are tempted.”†

The Christian religion then teaches, that our first parents having sinned and lost the Divine Image, the fallen nature became so predominant, that it was by them transferred to their offspring: but in order that man might be restored to favour, and to a state of purity, it pleased the Almighty to promise and send a Redeemer, whose sacrifice of Himself He saw meet to accept, as the means of reconciliation and forgiveness of sins; hereby putting an end to all those sacrifices, which, from the fall, or very soon after, to the time when Christ thus offered up Himself, had been adopted as the means of obtaining acceptance with God. And although we cannot trace this practice to a Divine command, earlier than the time of Moses; yet the universal adoption of it by the religious of all ages, is a strong implication that it was of

* Heb. iv. 15.

† Heb. ii. 18.

Divine origin, instituted in reference to that
 “One offering, by which Christ hath perfected
 for ever them that are sanctified.”*

Thus, the chief objects of the coming of
 Christ, evidently appear to have been, First, by
 the sacrifice of Himself, to make atonement to
 God for us, and to become the Mediator be-
 tween God and man:—Secondly, by the sancti-
 fying operation of the Holy Spirit, “To finish
 transgressions, and to make an end of sins, and
 to bring in everlasting righteousness.”† And
 thirdly, by putting an end to the legal dispensa-
 tion, and, as the apostle expresses it, “Blotting
 out the hand-writing of ordinances that was
 against us,”‡ to lead mankind to a more pure
 and spiritual worship of the Divine Being.

It also appears that the Christian redemption
 is throughout a work of love. “God so *loved*
 the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son,
 that whosoever believeth in Him should not
 perish, but have everlasting life.”§ In this
 point of view, we contemplate this interesting
 and important subject; and not as the effect of
 implacable wrath, as some represent it. Christ
 was and is the Gift of God. Thus the Holy
 Scriptures represent the subject to us; and
 surely, the greater the gift, the greater the love.
 “God commendeth his love towards us, in that
 while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”||

* Heb. x. 14.

† Dan. ix. 24.

‡ Col. ii. 14.

§ John iii. 16.

|| Rom. v. 8.

He co-operated with the Father in this gracious design ; and though He was of the same Divine nature, He condescended to take upon Him our human nature, and “ was made flesh and dwelt among us,”* until He had, by his life and by his death, as man, completed the work that was given Him to do ; after which He ascended to that glory, which He had with the Father before the world began.

Here we are led to consider the Divinity of our blessed Saviour, in which we, as a people do most surely believe ; but as every thing relating to the Divine Being, which is not expressly revealed, is far above the reach of human comprehension, we are desirous of avoiding all such particular disquisitions, as lead beyond the clear expression of Holy Writ. We can indeed say on this, as on every other occasion, that we believe all that the Scriptures have spoken and inculcated : we believe that the Evangelist was clearly speaking of Jesus Christ, and of his Divinity, or Godhead, when he said : “ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him ; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” † “ And the Word was made

* John i. 14.

† Heb. ix. 14.

flesh, and dwelt among us.”* Here we have a clear and full testimony, both to the Divinity and the humanity of Christ; and we have, ever since we were a people, borne testimony to this Scripture doctrine.

We likewise believe in the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, which is frequently united in Scripture with the Father and with the Son; and whose office, in the instruction and salvation of mankind, is set forth in divers passages of Holy Writ. See Matthew xxviii. 19. John xv. 26. Acts xxviii. 25. Hebrews ix. 14.

This belief in the Divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, induced some of the teachers in the Christian Church, about three hundred years after the personal appearance of Christ, to form a doctrine to which they gave the name of Trinity; but in our writings we seldom make use of this term; thinking it best, on such a subject, to keep to scriptural expressions, and to avoid those disputes which have since perplexed the Christian world, and led into speculations beyond the power of human abilities to decide. If we consider that we ourselves are composed of an union of “spirit, and soul, and body,”† and yet cannot determine how even these are united; how much less may we expect perfect clearness on a subject

* John i. 1—4

† Thess. v. 25.

so far above our finite comprehension, as that of the Divine Nature!

After expressing our sentiments on what is called the Trinity, it will be proper to explain our views of the doctrine of justification, concerning which so much diversity of sentiment prevails; some imputing it wholly to faith, and others principally, if not wholly, to works.

So far as remission of sins, and a capacity to receive salvation, are parts of justification, we attribute it to the sacrifice of Christ; “in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”* But when we consider justification as a state of Divine favour and acceptance, we ascribe it not simply either to faith or works, but to the sanctifying operation of the Spirit of Christ, from which only living faith and acceptable works proceed; and by which we may come to know, that “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God.”†

In attributing our justification, through the grace of God in Christ Jesus, to the operation of the Holy Spirit, which sanctifies the heart, and produces the work of regeneration, we are supported by the testimony of the apostle Paul, who says: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but of his mercy he

* Eph. i. 7.

† Rom. viii. 16.

saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” * Again : “ But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” †

By this view of the doctrine of justification, we conceive the apparently different sentiments of the apostles Paul and James are reconciled. Neither of them say, that faith alone, or works alone, are the cause of our being justified ; but as one of them asserts the necessity of faith, and the other of works, for effecting this great object, a clear and convincing proof is afforded that both contribute to our justification ; and that faith without works, and works without faith, are equally dead.

The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, is so connected with the Christian religion, that it will be proper to say something also on this subject. In explaining our belief of this doctrine, we refer to the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. In this chapter is clearly laid down the resurrection of a body, though not of the same body that dies : “ There are celestial bodies, and there are bodies terrestrial ; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. So also is the resurrection of the dead.—It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body :

* Titus iii. 5.

† 1 Cor. vi. 11.

there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.”* Here we rest our belief in this “mystery,” without desiring to pry into it beyond what is revealed to us; remembering that “secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children.”†

Many are the arguments and evidences which might be brought forward in favour of the Christian religion; but none appear to be more forcible, than the purity of that morality which is inculcated by it; and which is most effectually adapted to the promotion of the happiness of mankind in this world, as well as in that which is to come. A just test of principles, as well as of men, was laid down by our Saviour in these words: “By their fruits ye shall know them.”‡ It is the conduct to which principles lead, by which we are to judge of their rectitude; rather than by the actions of men, who may profess these principles, but whose weakness may often cause a violation of them. Now, to apply this test to Christ and his religion, let us first attend to that angelic song, with which his birth was introduced into the world: “Glory to God in the highest, and

* 1 Cor. xv. 40, 42, 44, 50.

† Deut. xxix. 29.

‡ Matt. vii. 20.

on earth peace, good will towards men.* Next, let us consider how his precepts and his example corresponded with it. Read that most excellent sermon on the mount; look at the example He has left us, under all the temptations and trials which, for our sakes, were permitted to assail Him! With what firmness did He reprove the vices and hypocrisy of the Jews! With what meekness did He bear their insults and persecutions! Truly, indeed, was it foretold of Him: "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not his mouth."† And when this people had executed upon Him all that their malice could devise, He, consistently with the precepts which He had inculcated, in return for all their injuries, put up this most affecting prayer: "Father! forgive them; they know not what they do."‡

But this example and these precepts were not confined to our Holy Head and High Priest. In that part of conduct which is the most difficult for human nature, the forgiveness of injuries, we find the proto-martyr, Stephen, followed his Lord's example; and when expiring under the cruelties of the same people, thus poured out his soul unto God: "Lord! lay not

* Luke ii. 14.

† Isaiah liii. 7.—This whole chapter is a remarkable prediction of the coming and sufferings of Christ.

‡ Luke xxiii. 34.

this sin to their charge.”* What other religion is there, that inculcates a conduct like this! that teaches not only to forgive injuries, but even to pray for those that are the cause of them!—Precepts which alone give a decided preference to Christianity, above all other religions in the world!

Let us next look into those epistles, which the apostles addressed to the Christian converts, both among the Jews and gentiles; and there we shall again find, in addition to the doctrinal part of Christianity, such a spirit of pure morality and true love, so uniformly inculcated, and the duties of every station in life taught with so much simplicity and energy, as to render the reading of them pleasing and instructive; and at the same time gaining the assent of our judgment, however remote from them our practice may frequently be. The following extract from the Epistle to the Romans is brought forward, not because it contains matter superior to many other parts of the epistles; but because of the conciseness, the simplicity, and the energy with which the important precepts are conveyed: “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not

* Acts vii. 60.

slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them that persecute you: bless and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice: and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one towards another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*—“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”†

It may not be necessary to enter much into those arguments, which the miracles performed by Christ and his apostles afford for the truth of the Christian religion. If what is advanced in favour of the truth and credibility of the Holy Scriptures, be admitted, these arguments must unavoidably strike every considerate and impartial mind with irresistible force. It may, however, be proper to observe, that the credibility of these accounts, so far at least as they relate to our blessed Saviour, receives great additional force, from being confirmed, in many parts, by four different testimonies; whose distinct concurring evidence affords no small

* Rom xii. 9—18.

† Rom. xii. 21.

confirmation of the truth of their relations. This confirmation is rather increased than lessened, by the slight variations which sometimes appear; for, with these variations, no suspicion can reasonably be fixed of a pre-concerted design to impose upon the world. Two of the evangelists, at least, were witnesses of what they wrote; a third tells us, that he was one of those who received information from such as, from the beginning, were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word; and the fourth is supposed to have written when in company with the apostle Peter, and to have received his information and instruction from him. To these relations of the evangelists, the following declaration and testimony of Peter, afford additional confirmation: “We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; but were eye-witnesses of his Majesty; for He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice from the Excellent Glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*

In whatever point of view, therefore, we consider the Christian Religion, it exhibits to us a plan and design worthy of our great and gracious Creator; and so well adapted to the state of the human heart, that nothing appears

* 2 Peter i. 16, 17.

to be wanting, but the acceptance of the terms on which it is offered. Yet, as the condition on which only we can be true Christians, requires us to deny ourselves, and take up a daily cross to our evil propensities, this doctrine and that Foundation on which it is built, are now, as formerly, to some a stumbling block, and to others, foolishness. It is indeed to be feared, that many who adopt the Christian Religion in theory, are but little acquainted with it in practice. True Christianity is more adapted to the heart than to the head: it is not so much a system of doctrines, as it is the power of God unto salvation. Nevertheless, it necessarily includes doctrines; but then it requires a union of the spirit with the letter; of faith and of works; of the power and of the form of godliness. To unite these in our hearts, and in our actions, is what appears to me to constitute the true and perfect Christian.

Chapter IV.

ON THE INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The Gift of the Spirit an essential of Christianity.—Different names of the Spirit.—Necessity of its assistance.—Universally afforded—and in all ages—but most plentifully in the Gospel.—Unconditional election and reprobation disowned and disproved.

In the preceding chapter, the gift of the Holy Spirit has been considered as an essential part of true Christianity; but as it is a doctrine on which we insist,* more than other professors of the Christian name, I have apprehended it proper to appropriate a chapter to this subject; and for that reason, have said less upon it than I should otherwise have done, when treating of the general doctrines of Christianity.

* The word “insist” is here used, because it is not a doctrine peculiar to us, but only one on which we lay more stress than most other Christians. The Church of England holds the doctrine much as we do, as may be seen in the liturgy, from which are extracted the two following collects, and to which others of a similar tendency might be added: “The fifth Sunday after Easter.”—“O Lord, from whom all good things do come! grant to us thy humble servants, that, *by thy holy Inspiration*, we may think those things that be good; and *by thy merciful guiding* may perform the same, through our Lord Jesus Christ. *Amen.*” “The 19th Sunday after Trinity.”—“O God! forasmuch as without Thee we are unable to please Thee; mercifully grant that *thy Holy Spirit may, in all things, direct and rule* our hearts, through,” &c.—See also Knox’s Christian Philosophy.

There are different names in the Scriptures, by which this Spirit is denominated. It is not only called the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, and of Christ; but it is also distinguished, with great propriety, by the appellation of “the Grace of God;”* as being a mark of his peculiar favour to mankind. Another appropriate denomination is “Light;” by which are evinced its effects, in manifesting what is good and what is evil: “For whatsoever doth make manifest is Light.”† Other names might be enumerated by which the same thing is distinguished; but these may be sufficient to convey a clear idea of what I have in view.

The Holy Scriptures so frequently make mention of this Divine Influence, and enforce it with so much energy, that there is no doctrine derived from these writings, on which they appear to be more clear and explicit, and to afford less room for objection and controversy.

In considering this subject, it may be proper to advance and support the following positions.

1.—The necessity of the assistance of the Holy Spirit, for understanding the things, and for working the works of God.

* In some instances, the word grace in Scripture simply means favour; but in others it evidently implies an inward operative principle, and is synonymous with the Holy Spirit.—See Cruden’s and Taylor’s Concordances, under Grace.

† Ephes. v. 13.

2.—That such a portion of this Spirit, as is necessary for working out the soul's salvation, is afforded to mankind universally.

With regard to the first position, the apostle Paul argues the case so forcibly, and with such logical clearness, that I shall quote his words, both as the best arguments and the best authority, that can be adduced on the occasion: "What man," saith he, "knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."* After which he proceeds thus: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God: which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned."†

In the epistle to the Romans, the apostle also shows the necessity of the assistance of the Spirit, saying expressly: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his—for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God: for ye have not received

* 1 Cor. ii. 11.

† 1 Cor. ii. 12—14.

the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father! The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.—Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.”*

From these passages, and from many others which might be adduced, it appears clearly, that the Influence of the Holy Spirit is necessary for the performance of those duties, which make us truly acceptable unto God. It is by our humble attention to this Spirit, that we are instructed in these duties, and enabled to perform them; and, by abiding under its purifying Influences, we are gradually created anew in Christ Jesus, unto good works. By this Spirit we are also instructed in the great and solemn duty of prayer: “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.”† It is likewise by this Spirit, that those who are called to the sacred office of Gospel ministry, are “made able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.”‡

In addition to these clear and forcible

* Rom. viii. 9, 14, 15, 16, 26. † Ephes. vi. 18.

‡ 2 Cor. iii. 6.

declarations, it may be proper to remark, that they are grounded on such arguments, as evince them not to be confined to the times of the apostles, or primitive Christians; but, being adapted to the weakness of man, they may reasonably be supposed to last as long as that weakness remains: and unless it can be proved that, since those times, mankind have received such an extraordinary accession of natural powers, as makes religion and virtue more easily attainable than formerly, we should thankfully submit to be instructed and assisted by the same supernatural means, which the Holy Scriptures so strongly recommend, as essential to the performance of those religious duties, which we owe to our great Creator, and to our merciful Redeemer.

We come now to the second position, viz: "That such a portion of the Holy Spirit, as is necessary for working out the soul's salvation, is afforded to mankind universally."

It has already been shown, that there are different names by which this Spirit is distinguished. We apprehend it to be a degree of the same, which the apostle alluded to, when, writing to the Romans respecting the state of the gentile world, he says: "For when the gentiles, which have not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law; these having not the Law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the Law written in their

hearts; their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another.”*

We also find that the Spirit of God strove with the antediluvian world; respecting which the Almighty gave this declaration: “My Spirit shall not always strive with man.”† Concerning the Jews in the Mosaic Dispensation, Nehemiah expresses himself thus in his prayer: “Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them.”‡ And by Isaiah it is said: “They rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit; therefore He was turned to be their enemy.”§

Thus we see in every age and state of the world, there has been a secret Principle at work in the minds of men, which formed the basis of all true religion; and by inattention and disobedience to which, they fell into those enormities that produced the just judgments of an offended God. We believe that this Divine Principle is, as has already been intimated, the same with that which the evangelist John calls, “the True Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world;”|| that it is the Gospel which Paul says, “was preached to [or in ¶] every creature which is under heaven;”** and that it is what he elsewhere styles, “the

* Rom. ii. 14, 15. † Gen. vi. 3. ‡ Neh. ix. 20.

§ Isa. lxiii. 10. || John i. 9.

¶ The Greek is “ἐν πάσῃ τῇ κτίσει.” ** Col. i. 23.

Grace of God, which bringeth salvation, and has appeared unto all men.” *

But although this Divine Principle has always been, in degree, afforded to mankind; yet it was by the Gospel Dispensation, not only that life and immortality were brought to light; but that the Holy Spirit was more plentifully poured forth, and became, as it were, the leading feature of that religion, which our blessed Redeemer has introduced into the world. With this view of the subject, I apprehend the evangelist expresses himself thus: “The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” † And in another place: “The Law was given by Moses; but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ.” ‡ Of this Grace the apostle Paul, in particular, frequently speaks in his epistles; but most fully in that to Titus, in the passage just referred to. This passage it may be proper here to give at large: “The Grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar

* Tit. ii. 11.

† John vii. 39.

‡ John i. 17.

people, zealous of good works.”* This is a text to which we often refer, as describing the essence of the Christian Religion; and conveying, in the clearest manner, our belief in the quality, the universality, and the effects of that gift of Divine Grace, to which the apostle bears this ample testimony; and which, we here see, co-operates with that great object, for which the Son of God was manifested in the flesh. This object, according to the testimony of another apostle, was, “To destroy the works of the devil;”† the principal of which, it scarcely need be said, is sin.

But to return to the preceding passage in Titus. There are three inferences evidently resulting from it. 1.—That this grace is of that quality which produceth salvation. 2.—That it is universal: not confined to a part of mankind; but extended “to all men.” 3.—That its instructions are such as invariably lead to the practice of piety and virtue. The first and third of these inferences will, it is presumed, be generally if not universally acceded to; but the second, though equally deducible from the apostle’s words, some may endeavour to explain away; and to reconcile with those ideas of unconditional election and reprobation, which they have entertained: and on which it may be proper, in this place, to make a few remarks.

* Titus ii. 11—14.

† 1 John iii. 8.

This doctrine asserts, that the Almighty has irrevocably decreed a certain number of human beings to everlasting happiness; and that the rest are certainly doomed to the commission of sin, and to its consequence, eternal misery. That this is no exaggerated description, will appear from the quotations given in the margin,* from the writings of the advocates of this doctrine; and I should think, that to describe it was enough to refute it, had we not, in many other instances, as well as in this, occasion to observe, in how different a point of view different men see the same subject. That the Holy Scriptures, those faithful records both of the justice and mercy of God, should be pressed to the support of such a sentiment, is matter of surprise. I am aware that some parts of the Scriptures, taken without their context, may be supposed to incline to this sentiment.† This is particularly the case in

* "I say, that by the ordination and will of God, Adam fell. God would have man to fall. We refer the cause of hardening us to God."—*Calvin*. "God hath predestinated not only unto damnation, but also unto the causes of it, whomsoever He saw meet."—*Beza*. "It is the opinion of our doctrines, that God did inevitably decree the temptation and fall of man."—*Paræus*. "God moveth the robber to kill. He killeth, God forcing him thereunto."—*Zuinglius*. "Reprobate persons," saith *Piscator*, "are absolutely ordained to this twofold end; to undergo everlasting punishment, and necessarily to sin; and therefore to sin, that they may be justly punished."—See Barclay's Apology, Prop. v. Sect. 2.

† It is worthy of remark, that several passages in our

the Epistle to the Romans, in which the apostle is setting forth the call of the gentiles, and the temporary rejection of the Jews ; justifying, with great energy, the power and the wisdom, the goodness and the severity of God, in this respect : but that he meant thereby to inculcate, that the Almighty, personally and unconditionally, elected individuals to a state of future happiness, and decreed others to a state of misery, is what, I think, no fair construction of the Epistle will warrant. On the contrary, after showing and enforcing the right of the Almighty, to make use of individuals, or of nations, for carrying on his great and unsearchable designs ; the apostle sets forth, even with respect to the gentiles, the call of whom it was peculiarly his object to justify, that their continuance in Divine favour, depended upon the steadfastness of their faith and faithfulness to Him, who had “called them out of darkness into his marvellous

English translation, which seem to favour this doctrine, are capable of a different rendering. For instance, in *Acts* ii. 23, where it is translated, “Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,” &c., the Greek word, ἐκδοτον rendered *delivered*, may, with equal or more propriety, be translated, *given forth* ; then the passage may be read thus : “Him who was given forth by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain.” Another Greek word is used in every passage that is rendered, *delivered*. *Acts* iv. 27, xiii. 48, and 1 *Peter* ii. 8, are also capable of being differently translated.

light :” * and “made them partakers of his promise in Christ Jesus.” †

The following quotation from that part of the Epistle in which the apostle may be said to sum up his arguments, will tend to set the subject in a clear light : “For I speak to you gentiles ; inasmuch as I am the apostle of the gentiles, I magnify mine office.—If some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them ; and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree, boast not against the branches ; but if thou boast [remember] thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith ; be not high minded, but fear ; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God : on them which fell, severity ; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness ; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off : and they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in ; for God is able to graff them in again.” ‡

Here we see no unconditional election or reprobation ; but a doctrine which perfectly comports with the declaration of the Almighty

* 1 Pet. ii. 9.

† Ephes. iii. 6.

‡ Rom. xi. 13—23.

about six hundred years before, when, after sending the prophet Jeremiah to the potter's house, to instruct him at once in the Divine power and mercy, He sent a message by him to the house of Israel, in this memorable language: "O house of Israel! cannot I do with you as this potter, saith the Lord? Behold! as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel!"* After thus setting forth his power, the Almighty proceeds to show in what manner He is pleased to exercise it: "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against which I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them."†

Thus we see the principle of the dealings of God with mankind, in different ages of the world. The Ninevites are a proof of the truth of the first part of the foregoing declaration; and the Israelites of the latter: for, however the Almighty may, in some instances, see meet to distinguish a people or individuals, by some

* Jer. xviii. 6.

† Jer. xviii. 7—10.

peculiar privileges; yet, if they neglect and trample upon his law, and are unmindful of the favours which they receive, He does not fail to punish them accordingly: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities,"* was the declaration concerning this highly favoured people; from which and various other passages in Holy Writ, we may safely conclude, that man's destruction is of himself; agreeably to another declaration of the Almighty by one of his prophets: "O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help."† "The grace of God which bringeth salvation, and hath appeared unto all men," affordeth this help. It is saving grace; and it is universal grace. It is a gift consistent with every attribute of the Deity; and with the declarations concerning Him, recorded in the Scriptures of Truth.

That the Almighty may see meet, in his unsearchable wisdom, to confer a greater degree of this grace on some than on others; and that He may peculiarly call some to particular services in his church, or in the world, are no doubt consistent with the Divine attributes: but with respect to the future happiness of mankind, there is abundant reason to believe, that all receive a sufficient degree of grace to

* Amos iii. 2.

† Hosea xiii. 9.

procure it ; and if this grace is not equally distributed to all, yet, surely, we may conclude that, at last, the judgment will be according to this most excellent rule : “ Where much is given much will be required ;” * and, consequently, that where little is given, but little will be required.

In addition to what has been already said, it may be proper to observe, that, in considering this subject, we should always distinguish between those passages in the Scriptures, which simply declare the power of the Almighty, and those which set forth the manner in which He exercises that power. Thus the apostle has said, and no doubt said truly : “ He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy : and whom He will He hardeneth.” † But then are we not also told that “ the Lord is good to all ; and his tender mercies are over all his works ;” ‡ and has not the very same apostle, after recommending that prayers and intercessions should be made for all men, § expressly declared that “ this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour ; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the Truth ? ” || Correspondent with this is the language of the apostle Peter : “ The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-

* Luke xii. 41.

† Rom. ix. 18.

‡ Ps. cxiv. 9.

§ 1 Tim. ii. 1.

|| 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4.

ward; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”*

It should also be considered that hardness of heart is the punishment, and not the original cause, of sin; nor does the hardness spoken of by the apostle in the Epistle to the Romans, necessarily imply perpetual hardness; for of the Jews, whom he represents in a state of hardness he says: “If they abide not still in unbelief, they shall be grafted in again.” †

If God did judicially harden or suffer to be hardened, those who had been long wilfully disobedient to his laws, He might, with great propriety, “show his wrath, and make his power known, in the vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction” ‡ by their own accumulated transgressions. Thus were Pharaoh and the Jews monuments of the justice of an offended God, and warnings to succeeding generations, not to despise those long-suffering mercies, with which He waits the return of those who sin against Him.

Seeing then that the designs of our great and gracious Creator are so replete with “good-will to men;” that, as far as is consistent with the free agency with which He has seen meet to endow us, He is ever willing our happiness, and furnishing us with the means of procuring it;

* 2 Pet. iii. 9. † Rom. xi. 23. ‡ Rom. ix. 22.

“let us draw nigh with a true heart, in full assurance of faith;”* and, trusting in that merciful redemption, by which we have, on repentance, the forgiveness of sins, “let us come boldly to the throne of grace; that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”† Thus will that sanctification of heart, and holiness of life be experienced, without which we are told “no man shall see the Lord;”‡ and thus all will redound to the glory of God, who has “shown the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus.”§

* Heb. x. 22. † Heb. iv. 16. ‡ Heb. xii. 14. § Eph. ii. 7.

Chapter V.

ON DIVINE WORSHIP AND GOSPEL MINISTRY.

Worship an act of the soul towards God.—Meetings for worship may be held in silence.—Public worship an indispensable duty—reasonable and beneficial.—Silent worship adapted to all states.—Its advantages.—Scripture arguments for it.—Prayer a necessary duty.—The qualifications of Ministers.—Human learning not essential to the ministry.—No individual has a right exclusively to assume the exercise of it.—On women's preaching.—On preaching for hire.—Tithes.

HAVING, in the preceding chapters, treated on those subjects in which we nearly agree with the generality of Christian professors, I come now to consider those points, in which we materially differ from them. Two of these, being nearly connected, are included in one chapter, though it will also be necessary to consider them separately. These are, Divine Worship and Gospel Ministry.

With respect to the first we consider that worship is an act of the soul towards God; that He is a Spirit; that the soul of man is spiritual; and therefore that, in the performance of the solemn duty of worship, words are not essentially necessary; because He, who is a Spirit, understands the language of the spirit. Nevertheless, we do not disapprove the use of words in our religious meetings, whether in prayer, praises, or in the exercise of Gospel ministry;

when they are delivered under the Influence of the Holy Spirit, which only can, as we apprehend, rightly qualify for the performance of these important services. Hence, when we come to our places of religious worship, we think it right to sit down in silence, and wait therein upon God, for the assistance of that Spirit which helpeth our infirmities, and without which we know not what to pray for as we ought. Here we may be favoured, at times, to feel the Spirit itself making intercession for us ; under the influence of which, we believe, a secret aspiration will ascend with more acceptance before the Father of spirits, than any form of words which may be prepared for us, or that does not arise from a heart thus qualified for verbal expression.

Holding our meetings under these impressions, it very frequently happens that they are continued throughout in silence ; a state which, when attended with a right exercise of mind, we consider as best adapted to the performance of the solemn duty of Divine worship ; for here, every individual who feels his own condition and necessities, can secretly pour out his soul unto God, without distraction or interruption ; and here also we can freely partake of those Divine Influences upon the mind, which, when mercifully afforded, constitute the highest enjoyment of man upon earth.

But we are sensible that these effects are not

always experienced in our religious meetings. We fear that some who attend them, have not their minds rightly exercised; we know that Divine good is not at our command: and we believe that the sensible enjoyment of it, is often withheld for a season, and sometimes for a long season, from the truly exercised mind: "Verily Thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour!" * But even in this situation, we think it much safer to wait in a state of passive silence, than, by the activity of the creature, to rush unprepared into those external acts of devotion, which we believe are no further acceptable, than as they come from a heart rightly prepared to offer them. A state of humble, silent waiting, and dependence on Divine help, is so adapted to the relation in which man stands to his great Creator, that we believe it peculiarly likely to meet with Divine acceptance and regard: "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh, shall find watching." † But to those who do not patiently abide in this state of mind, a very different consequence is shown to result: "Behold! all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." ‡

* Isaiah xiv. 15. † Luke xii. 37. ‡ Isaiah l. 11.

And we ought by no means to forget the consequence, under the Law, of offering strange fire to the Lord.” *

We consider it an indispensable duty, publicly to meet together for the worship of God; and “not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.” † It is both a reasonable and a beneficial duty;—reasonable, because it is a public acknowledgment of our dependence on the Supreme Being;—and beneficial, because we may, if rightly exercised in our minds, be favoured to draw nigh unto God, by the Spirit of his Son; and thus experience that communion, which is with the Father and with his Son Christ Jesus; and which the true Christian travellers also have one with another in Him.

In a silent travail in spirit for this desirable experience, the spiritual strength of those who are thus exercised, is increased; they become helpful one to another, in promoting the circulation of that life in which their fellowship consists; and are, at times, so united in feeling one for and with another, as to attain to an experience similar to that which the apostle describes: “Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.” ‡

It may be supposed by some, that, although

* Lev. x. 1—5. † Heb. x. 25. ‡ 1 Cor. xii. 26.

this mode of worship may be adapted to adults in religious experience, it is too refined an attainment for those who are in a state of infancy in religion, or who are much strangers to it.—We, however, consider it as eminently adapted to every human being, who is desirous of being acceptable in the sight of his Creator. Where is the well-disposed mind, that has not occasion for an attention to that universal command: “What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch!”* This secret attention and exercise of mind, is therefore necessary for all; and as man is willing to be reduced into it, the weak and erring mind may be brought to the discovery of its own state; and, feeling the necessity of Divine aid to overcome its evil propensities, and to secure eternal happiness, may thus feel also the necessity and the qualification, to pray for forgiveness of past sins, and for ability so to live under the influence of Divine fear and love, as to experience preservation from those evils which abound in the world, or to which the mind may be naturally prone.

Many, therefore, we conceive, are the advantages which result from silent worship. It enables a number of Christians to meet together for the performance of this important duty, without depending on any man to assist them therein; a dependence, which deprives numbers

* Mark xiii. 37.

of publicly discharging this duty, even once in the week. It also preserves from the dangerous situation, of drawing nigh unto God with the mouth, and honouring Him with the lips, whilst the heart is far from Him; and it is peculiarly adapted to the performance of that worship in spirit and in truth, concerning which our blessed Redeemer has given this memorable testimony: "The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth." *

In addition to the foregoing reasons, many passages may be adduced from the Scriptures, pointing out the advantage of silent waiting upon God. In reading those devotional effusions, which have been transmitted to us in the book of Psalms, we find this waiting strongly and frequently inculcated. The evangelical prophet likewise speaks frequently of the benefit of such a state of waiting, in which silence is either expressed, or necessarily implied. The latter part of the fortieth chapter, and the beginning of the forty-first, are so apposite to the present subject, and, at the same time, so replete with religious instruction and consolation, that it may be useful to give them at

* John iv. 23, 24.

large: "Why sayest thou, O Jacob! and speakest, O Israel! my way is hid from the Lord; and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint. Keep silence before me, O islands! and let the people renew their strength; let them come near, and let them speak; let us come near together to judgment."*

But, whilst we are laying aside the outward forms, we are far, very far indeed, from desiring to discourage the practice of true prayer. It is a duty which we owe to our great Creator; and which the feelings of our own manifold wants and dangers, will often draw from the rightly concerned mind. It is indeed difficult to conceive, how any thing deserving the name of religion can be preserved without it.—"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation,"† is an injunction delivered by our Holy Head

* Isaiah xl. 27 to xli. 1. † Matt. xxvi. 41.

and High Priest; who in this, as in many other instances, has shown, that He was, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews expresses it, “touched with the feeling of our infirmities;” * for He immediately adds: “The spirit indeed is willing; but the flesh is weak.”

In this command, our blessed Lord sets forth both the necessity and the preparations for this great duty, which constitutes a very important part of religious worship. We are not to rush hastily or unpreparedly either into private or public prayer; but, having our minds engaged in true watchfulness, or waiting for the Influence of the Holy Spirit upon the soul, we thereby become qualified to put up our petitions to the Father of Spirits, in such a manner as the impressions which He affords us of our wants shall indicate. And when we are brought into an humbling consideration of the many mercies and favours, of which we are unworthy partakers; as the objects of creation, of redemption, and of that bountiful provision which is made for us; we shall find abundant cause frequently to offer that praise, by which the Almighty is glorified; and of which He is, with the Son of his love, through the Eternal Spirit, for ever worthy.

After these remarks on religious worship, we

* Heb. iv 15.

proceed to the consideration of the subject of Gospel Ministry.

The right qualification of those who occupy the station of ministers, is of great importance to every religious society. It will, I presume, be universally agreed to be, in the first place, necessary, that the principles and practice of these, should correspond with their profession and station; and next, that they be called and qualified, according to the nature and principles of that religion, which they stand forth to espouse. To apply these self-evident rules to the Christian religion, under its various divisions, it must be deemed necessary for a gospel minister, that he possess a heartfelt conviction of the truths of Christianity, as well as of the principles of that particular society, of which he is a member; also that his moral conduct be such as the Gospel of Christ requires. When there is any material deficiency either in principle or practice, there is reason to fear that such will do more injury than benefit to the cause of religion; as well as render themselves objects of disgust and contempt. “Unto the wicked God saith: What hast thou to do to declare my statutes; or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth; seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee?”*

* Psalm l. 16, 17.

As to the further qualification for a Gospel minister, although the definition already given may be generally agreed to, yet, in the application of it, there exists some diversity of sentiment. As the nature and principle of the Christian religion are the same now as formerly, we conceive that the same Divine call and Influence, which qualified the early ministers and promulgators of the Gospel, should be, in a degree at least, experienced by its ministers to the end of the world: especially as we have no other qualification pointed out in the Holy Scriptures. This call was “not of men, neither by man; but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father.”* We believe that the same is inwardly and immediately received, by the true gospel ministers of the present day; and that, in the discharge of the duties of this sacred office, the renewed influences of Divine wisdom and strength should be waited for and experienced. Thus ministers are qualified to speak to the state of their hearers; and to baptize them into the Name [or Power] of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; thereby fulfilling that true commission for gospel ministry, given by our Saviour.—Matt. xxviii. 19.

The foregoing qualifications correspond with the description, which the apostle Peter gives of prophecy, and which we conceive to be

* Gal. i. 1.

descriptive of the essentials of a gospel minister. "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."* Thus we see, that both ancient prophecy and Gospel ministry came "not of men, nor by man;" that they required those who exercised them to be holy men of God; such as could say to others: "Walk, as ye have us for an example;"† and that, in performing the duties of these offices, they should speak "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" or in other words, as the "Spirit gave them utterance."‡ If ministers are not thus influenced and directed, we may expect the declaration respecting the prophets formerly, who ran and were not sent, to be verified: "They shall not profit the people at all."§ Nor should this serious language be forgotten: "Wo unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing."||

What is said respecting an inward call to the ministry, is by no means peculiar to our religious society. However the doctrine of the Influence of the Spirit may be slighted by some, it is in this instance, as well as in its general influence and operation, clearly maintained by the Church of England, as appears by the following question put to those who apply to be admitted to the office of deacon: "Do

* 2 Peter i. 21. † Phil. iii. 17. ‡ Acts ii. 4.

§ Jer. xxiii. 32. || Ezek. xiii. 3.

you trust that you are *inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost*, to take upon you this office and ministration," &c. The answer required is, "I trust so." This doctrine is also consistent with the general observation on the priesthood, made by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron."* The writings of the apostles abundantly show, not only whence they derived their commission, but also the Influence under which they exercised it: thus, the apostle Paul says: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."†

From all these considerations, we believe, as is already stated, that it is necessary, in the first call to the ministry, to be "inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost;" and that, in the various performances of this sacred office, the renewings of this Divine Influence and ability, should be waited for and experienced, as the most likely means to fulfil the apostolic exhortation: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified, through Jesus Christ; to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."‡

* Heb. v. 4.

† 1 Cor. ii. 13.

‡ 1 Pet. iv. 11.

From our views of this important subject, there arise a few points, in which we materially differ from most other professors of Christianity.

1.—In not considering human learning essential to a Gospel minister.

2.—In believing that no individual has a right to assume the exclusive exercise of this ministry, in a congregation of Christians ; but that all, both male and female, who are rightly moved thereto, may exercise this gift.

3.—That this ministry being, if rightly received, received freely and without any pecuniary expense to qualify for it, it therefore ought to be freely communicated; and no further support expected by ministers, than what is authorized by Christ, and was practised by his apostles.

Upon each of these points it seems proper to make a few remarks.

On the first, very little appears necessary ; for if we consider the Holy Scriptures, and particularly the New Testament, as any guide to us in this matter, we shall not only find, that human literature is no where recommended for this office ; but likewise, that many of the apostles were illiterate men. It is also clear that the apostle Paul, though a man of learning, disclaimed the influence of it upon his ministry ; as appears from various parts of his epistles, particularly from the first and second chapters

of the epistle to the Corinthians, of which the first five verses of the second chapter, appear especially worthy of notice: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling: and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." *

But although we do not consider human learning as essential to a Gospel minister; yet we are so far from disesteeming or slighting its use, that we wish due attention to be paid to it by the members of our Society: for we believe that those who have it, and are disposed to make a right use of it, may apply it to the promotion of religion and virtue, as well as to the benefit of civil society.

With respect to the second point, we have the practice of the primitive Church so decidedly in our favour, that I am at a loss to conceive, how a practice so repugnant to it can have so generally prevailed as

* 1 Cor. ii. 1—5.

it has done, in almost all the Christian Churches.

The practice alluded to, is that of an individual assuming the exclusive exercise of the ministry; which is directly contrary to what the apostle recommends, as well as declares to be the practice of the Church in early times. This appears clear from the fourteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, where, first addressing the believers in general, the apostle thus expresses himself: "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts; but rather that ye may prophesy."* By this prophesying, he does not appear so much to mean the foretelling of future events, as the general purposes of Gospel ministry; for in the third verse he says: "He that prophesieth, speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."† After this general advice and explanation, he proceeds to show the superiority of prophesying to speaking with tongues; and then of those who have received this Divine gift, he says: "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace; for ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted."‡

After stating this unequivocal description of

* 1 Cor. xiv. 1. † 1 Cor. xiv. 3. ‡ 1 Cor. xiv. 29—31.

the rule and practice of the primitive Church, I shall proceed to the consideration of another part of this head, from which it appears that we admit women, as well as men, to a participation and exercise of the gift of Gospel ministry. We are aware of the objection which is made, from the prohibition laid upon women's speaking and teaching in the Church, and usurping authority over the man.* But if, on every occasion where there is an apparent difference between one part of Scripture and another, it is admitted that Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture, I believe very little difficulty will arise in removing this objection. It should be considered that the words used by the apostle on this occasion, cannot mean the exercise of Gospel ministry; because, in the very epistle in which he first mentions this prohibition, he gives particular directions respecting the manner in which women are to exercise that gift, which he denominates, "praying or prophesying;" † and which he no doubt considered as different from speaking, teaching, or usurping authority: for it cannot with any colour of reason be supposed, that the apostle would give directions for the exercise of that, which he thought should never be exercised." ‡

In addition to the preceding argument, several

* 1 Tim. ii. 11—15.

† 1 Cor. xi. 5.

‡ See John Locke's note on 1 Cor. xi. 3, where he supports the construction here given.

other passages in the Old and New Testaments may be advanced, which clearly show, that women, as well as men, were engaged in the work of the ministry, or as prophetesses in early times. Passing over Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah, we find Anna, a prophetess in the Jewish Church, publicly exercising her gift in the Temple; and hailing the recent birth of the Messiah. The Samaritan woman, with whom our Saviour held an interesting conversation at Jacob's Well, appears to have been the first of his disciples, who publicly preached the coming of Christ; and remarkable was the success which attended her ministry. Women were the first witnesses of our Lord's resurrection, and were commissioned by Him to proclaim this important truth to his disciples.

After his Ascension, they were, equally with the men, partakers of the effusions of the Holy Spirit; and we find several females mentioned as being prophetesses, or fellow-labourers with the apostles in the gospel of Christ. Luke in speaking of Philip the deacon, says: "The same man had four daughters, which did prophecy." * In the epistle to the Romans, the apostle says: "I recommend unto you Phebe our sister, who is a servant of the church that is at

* Acts xxi. 9.

Cenchrea.” *†—Greet Priscilla ‡ and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus.” § Salute Tryphæna and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, || which laboured much ¶ in the Lord.” ** And in another epistle, he says, “ Help those women that laboured with us in the Gospel,” † †

These are passages which clearly evince the admission of the female sex, in early times, to the work and service of the Gospel: but what adds not a little to our argument is, that this was expressly foretold in such a manner, as would, if we had no precedent, fully warrant the practice; for on this subject we may use the words of the apostle Peter, and say: “ This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all

* The Greek word in this passage rendered servant, is the same as in other places is rendered deacon or minister. It is rendered minister here in almost all other translations.

† Rom. xvi. 1.

‡ Priscilla is here, and in two other passages, placed before her husband; from which, and other circumstances, we may conclude she was a minister of no small eminence in the church.

§ Rom. xvi. 3.

|| The adjective for “beloved,” being in Greek in the feminine gender, shows that Persis was a woman.

¶ The Greek words here rendered “labour” and “laboured,” are the same as the apostle uses when he speaks of himself labouring in the Gospel.

** Rom. xvi. 12.

† † Phil. iv. 3.

flesh ; and your sons and your *daughters* shall prophesy ; and your young men shall see visions ; and your old men shall dream dreams ; and on my servants, and on my *handmaidens*, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophecy.”*

We come now to the third point, viz. the maintenance which is allowed to the ministers of the Gospel. On this subject the directions of our blessed Lord are so particular, that, with the practice of his apostles, they set the matter in a very clear point of view. The directions, so far as they relate to this subject, I shall transcribe from the tenth chapter of Matthew, when Christ sent forth the twelve apostles on their first mission : “ Heal the sick ; cleanse the lepers ; raise the dead ; cast out devils ; freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses :—for the workman is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and therein abide till ye go thence. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.”†

In the foregoing passage, we have directions for the conduct of the ministers of Christ. both when their ministry is received, and when

* Acts ii. 16—18.

† Mat. x. 8—14.

it is rejected. In the former case, all that is provided is temporary accommodation, whilst travelling in the work of the ministry; or so engaged therein, as to prevent their attention to their temporal occupations. In the latter case, they are by no means authorized to extort a forced maintenance; but, as a testimony against those who reject them, they are directed to shake off the dust that cleaveth to their feet. Well would it have been for the Christian Religion, had its ministers, under all denominations, adhered to their Lord's instructions on this subject; and acted with that noble disinterestedness which He inculcates, and which we find was practised by his immediate followers, so as to enable one of them to say: "I seek not yours, but you."*

And here I cannot well avoid expressing great regret for the wound, which, there is reason to believe, Christianity has received, and still receives, from a lucrative establishment for ministers; a circumstance which holds out a temptation for unqualified, and even immoral men, to seek for, and get into that office, with no better motive (I believe it will be generally allowed) than that which it was foretold would actuate the corrupted sons of Eli: "Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of bread."†

* 2 Cor. xii. 14. † 1 Sam. ii. 36.

We are aware of the arguments advanced from some expressions of the apostle Paul, in favour of an established support for ministers ; and which I apprehend are all comprised in the following words of the apostles : “ Do ye not know, that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple ; and they which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar ? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.”* Now all this only proves a support consistent with what “ the Lord hath ordained,” and which is already given in his own words. This we readily admit, and adopt in our practice ; but surely no one can infer, from the foregoing passages, that ministers are to be provided with a settled maintenance ; and are not to labour with their hands, or to be engaged in the usual occupations of life, for their own support, and that of their families !

That we are justified in the construction given of our Lord’s direction, and the apostle’s reference to it, is abundantly clear from the practice which resulted from it ; and which cannot be more completely or energetically described, than in the words of the same apostle contained in his most excellent address to the elders of Ephesus, which he concludes in this memorable language : “ I have coveted

* 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14.

no man's silver, or gold, or apparel; yea, you yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that, so labouring, ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."*

These being our sentiments on this important subject, we make no provision for the support of our ministers, further than the discharge of those expenses, which travelling in their religious services necessarily occasions; and, if we make no provision for the support of our own ministers, whose ministry we approve, we think ourselves fully warranted in declining to contribute to the support of others, and of a worship connected with them, from both of which we conscientiously dissent. A ministry with a settled maintenance, forced even from those, who so far disapprove of their establishment, as to withdraw from their teaching, is so evidently incompatible with the doctrine and practice of Christ and his apostles, that I think it unnecessary to say more to justify our principles in this respect. But, although it appears to me to be a system so deeply injurious to the interests of true religion, I have no doubt that many, not seeing the

* Acts xx. 33—35.

subject in the same point of view, have seriously entered, under these circumstances, into this vocation; and are piously concerned to discharge the duties of their station. These should be left to their own master, to whom we must all, at last, either stand or fall.

After what has been said respecting the general maintenance of Gospel Ministers, it appears superfluous to enter into argument against that most objectionable and anti-christian mode, of support by Tithes. Their Divine right is generally exploded and abandoned; their impolicy is almost as universally acknowledged. How far the testimony which we have borne against them may have contributed to produce these effects, is not for me to determine; but it is hoped that, so long as this yoke remains, that testimony will continue to be maintained, with the firmness and meekness which should ever be united in the support of religious truths.

Chapter VI.

ON BAPTISM AND THE SUPPER.

Preliminary Observations.—Two kinds of Baptism—Water and the Spirit —Remarks on Matt. xxviii. 19.—This and other arguments in favour of Water Baptism answered.—Sprinkling not Baptism.—Sprinkling of Infants not authorized by Scripture.—Circumstances attending it highly objectionable.—The Lord's Supper.—The [circumstances attending it fully admitted.—Not considered perpetual, any more than the washing of feet.—The true Lord's Supper.—Our dissent on these subjects, not from disesteem of Christianity, but the reverse.

BEFORE entering into a separate consideration of these subjects, I shall premise a few words on the nature of religious observances and ceremonies. These appear to me to be generally local or temporary; and, if we may judge from what we read in the New Testament, we may safely conclude, that the use of them is variable. There is not a practice more strictly enjoined by our blessed Lord, and that both by precept and example, than the washing of each other's feet, as related by the evangelist John, *chap. xiii.* But who, considering the different local circumstances, believes this to be a duty now incumbent upon us? The apostles who met at Jerusalem, to consider the attempt of some Jewish Christians, to impose the rite of circumcision on those gentiles who embraced

Christianity, came to a solemn, and no doubt right conclusion, on such things as it was then deemed necessary to observe;* yet none of these, except one of a moral nature, is now considered obligatory. Nay, we even find the apostle Paul, a few years after, enforcing a liberty with respect to meats offered to idols, which this decree certainly does not warrant; a decree which there is great reason to believe he had himself united in forming.

The Christian Church was, at that time, just emerging from the ceremonies of Judaism, and the superstitions of Heathenism. In this state of things, "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost," gradually to remove those legal observances and ceremonies, connected with the Mosaic Dispensation; and not to enjoin an immediate disregard to the whole of them at once. It was the morning of the Gospel day; and if the brightness of that morning has been greatly obscured, which I apprehend all Protestants agree with us in believing; and that the sun has been prevented from shining forth with meridian splendour, by the darkness of many unnecessary observances and traditions, which were afterwards introduced into the Christian Church; we must indeed regret the circumstance: but when further light is renewed and afforded, ought we not to avail ourselves of its advantages, and endeavour to stand open to

* Acts xv.

those further discoveries, which are consistent with the nature and spirit of the Gospel; and which may be supported as such, by the doctrines contained in the Holy Scriptures, particularly in the New Testament?

After making these general remarks, we may proceed to the consideration of the subject of Baptism. Of this we find two kinds mentioned in the New Testament; namely, Baptism with Water, and Baptism with the Spirit. The former was, in some degree, in use under the Jewish Law; and some writers mention that it was occasionally both added to circumcision, and substituted for it, in the admission of proselytes. When the forerunner of our Lord appeared to fulfil his mission, he made particular use of this ceremony; and from him it was called the Baptism of John. From this practice among the Jews, and by John the Baptist, water Baptism appears to have been introduced into the Christian Church, as the mode of acknowledging its converts; but we conceive it was no more an essential part of Christianity than other Jewish ceremonies, for a time practised by the early Christians.

It is clear that John considered his dispensation and baptism as only temporary; nor does he, as a substitute for his baptism, refer his disciples to any other baptism with water, to be instituted by Christ. On the contrary,

he plainly shows, that the baptism which was to supersede his, was to be of a different and a spiritual nature, as appears by these words: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: whose fan is in his hand; and He will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather the wheat into his garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."* On another occasion, John also says: "He must increase, but I must decrease."† From these expressions, as well as from others in the New Testament, we are induced to believe that the "one Baptism,"‡ which now remains necessary to the Church of Christ, is that of the Spirit. This, according to the foregoing instructive allegory, cleanses the heart; and, as the apostle Peter informs us, does not consist in putting away the filth of the flesh; but in procuring for us "the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."§

The practice of Water Baptism is principally defended by the direction given by our Saviour to his disciples, after his resurrection, when He addressed them in this manner: "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost," || &c.

* Matt. iii. 11, 12. † John iii. 30. ‡ Ephes. iv. 5

§ 1 Pet. iii. 21. || Matt. xxviii. 19.

But as we differ from most others in the construction of this passage, it will be proper to enter into a particular consideration of it.

It is to be regretted, that Christians have been so habituated to unite Baptism and water together in their view, that they seem almost to forget that there is a Baptism without water, by the Spirit. There are many passages in Scripture, where the words baptize and baptism are used in a figurative sense, and in which it is evident no allusion to the use of water is intended. This is peculiarly the case where these words are used by our blessed Lord, who appears never to have used them in reference to water, except where He expressly so defines the application; unless it can be intended by the passage in Matthew now under consideration; and which we think cannot be proved. There are two instances in which it is apprehended, all will agree, that water could not be intended; the first is the question put to the sons of Zebedee: "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of; and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"* By these expressions, and similar ones in the succeeding verse, it is evident that water cannot be understood; and, indeed, it is generally agreed, that both baptism and the cup, allude to a state of deep suffering and affliction. This is also the

* Mark x. 38.

obvious meaning of the expression in Luke :
 “I have a baptism to be baptized with ; and
 how am I straitened till it be accomplished !”*

From these applications of the words, baptize and baptism, it appears that they were at that time frequently used in a figurative manner ; and we think ourselves warranted in applying the foregoing passage in Matthew, with another in Mark, *ch.* xvi. 16, to an inward and spiritual Baptism. This construction is much corroborated by rendering the former passage, as the original Greek evidently implies : “Baptizing them *into* the Name of the Father,” &c. By this expression we apprehend is to be understood, the introducing of the believers into a feeling sense of the Power of God in Christ, by the Influences of the Holy Spirit ; all which the apostles were, no doubt, frequently made instrumental in producing in the hearts of their hearers. This application of the word “Name,” as symbolical of the Divine Power,† is not uncommon in Holy Writ ; and we conceive that no reasonable objection can be made to it. Thus the expressions of our Lord unite with those of the apostle Paul : “So many as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death :” ‡ and again : “As many as have

* Luke xii. 50.

† See the Concordances of Cruden and Taylor, under the word
 “Name.”

‡ Rom. vi. 3.

been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.”* That these expressions have no allusion to water baptism, appears to us evident from the context; and particularly from the following expression of the same apostle: “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body;—and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” †

It may be alleged, that the apostles understood the command in Matthew as applying to water baptism, and practised it accordingly. That they made use of baptism with water, has been already admitted; but that they did it in consequence of this command, is not easy to prove. But, supposing this to have been the case, it appears from various circumstances, that even the apostles were “slow of heart to believe” and understand this command, as well as other scriptures relating to the Gospel Dispensation: for, notwithstanding the express charge to “go and teach ALL nations,” connected with the words in dispute, we find how difficult a matter it was, to bring the apostles to this acknowledgment: “Then hath God also to the gentiles granted repentance unto life.” ‡ Such, it is evident, was their attachment to the Jewish nation and Law, that they slowly and gradually relinquished many of those ceremonies which were connected with them; and with some difficulty excused the gentile

* Gal. iii. 27.

† 1 Cor. xii. 13.

‡ Acts xi. 18.

converts from an adherence to these observances. The apostle Paul was, however, more quickly introduced into the spirituality of the Gospel Dispensation; and we think it is clear, that he did not understand our Lord's command, *Matt.* xxviii. 19, as enjoining the practice of water baptism; concerning which it is universally agreed that he was speaking, when he thanked God that he had baptized so very few as he mentions, out of the great numbers converted by him at Corinth to the Christian faith: "For Christ," says he, "sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel. *

It has been argued, that this expression of the apostle is general, and only implies that baptism was not the principal part of his mission. But we have at least an equal right to consider the words in their common acceptance; and as showing that, however the apostle might occasionally use water baptism, as a mode of initiating converts into the Christian Church, yet he did not consider it as a part of his commission; and consequently not essential to the Christian religion, nor to the soul's salvation. If he had considered it necessary to these important objects, it is difficult to conceive, how he could solemnly thank God for the omission of it.

Another argument in favour of water baptism

* 1 Cor. i. 17.

is urged from the following query of Peter, on the conversion of Cornelius and his family: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?"* &c. Now it appears very probable from this query, that it was a matter of doubt among the Christians of that time, whether water baptism was necessary to be continued; and that Peter, on this as well as on some other occasions, inclined to the continuance of a ceremony, at least partly Jewish. How closely even the apostles were attached to the Mosaic Law, and how slowly their minds opened to the Gospel Dispensation, has been already remarked. Notwithstanding the various predictions of the prophets, and the direct command of our Saviour Himself after his resurrection, it still required an extraordinary vision from Heaven to convince Peter, that, "Of a truth God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him."† It was about ten years after this circumstance, that the apostles and elders came together, to consider the propriety of exempting the gentile converts from the rite of circumcision; and it was not till after there had been much disputing, that they concluded not to impose this yoke upon them. Although Peter was present at this conference, and earnestly promoted the

* Acts x. 47.

† Acts x. 34, 35.

decision of it; yet it was, I apprehend, after this time, that the apostle Paul had occasion to blame him for his changeable conduct towards the gentiles, with respect to some Jewish customs.* From all these circumstances, we may account for Peter's continuing the practice of water baptism, as connected with that Dispensation under which he had been educated. However, we have reason to believe that his views on this subject enlarged, as his experience in the service of the Gospel increased; for we find him several years after, in one of his epistles, describing the Baptism that "doth now save us,"† in this manner: "Not the putting away the filth of the flesh; but the answer of a good conscience towards God;"‡ a description by no means applicable to water baptism, which, as it was then administered by immersion, did put away the filth of the flesh; and of which we may surely say, as was said of "meats and drinks, and of divers washings," that it "could not make perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;"§ they being imposed only

* Gal. ii. 11, 12, 13.

† There appears to be an inaccuracy in our translation of the verse preceding this passage. The "eight souls were saved," not *by*, but *from* or *through* the water: and many translators render it in this sense. Also the Greek word *αντιτυπον*, which is translated "figure," might be rendered antitype; a rendering which, in this place, gives a different idea of the meaning of the apostle.

‡ 1 Peter iii. 21.

§ Heb. ix. 9. 10.

until the time of reformation; by which is generally understood, the Gospel Dispensation.

In considering the various arguments on this subject, part of the diversity of sentiment appears to lie in the difficulty there sometimes is, to determine between the literal and the figurative use of words, which relate to it. Even water, as well as fire, is sometimes used figuratively. To be “born of *water* and the Spirit,”* has been considered, and we think rightly considered, by † some who believed in the propriety of water baptism, as figurative an expression as, being baptized “with the Holy Ghost and with *fire* ;” ‡ and we ought to remember the explanation which the evangelist himself gives of our Saviour’s use of the word water: “This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believed on Him should receive.” §

It is frequently said, that water baptism is appointed in the Christian Church, as a substitute for circumcision among the Jews. In answer to this, I would first query, from what part of the New Testament can the appointment of one instead of the other be proved? Can it be supposed, that, if our Saviour or his apostles had considered it in this point of view, they would have given no intimation of it? I apprehend that not a single text which will bear such a construction, can be produced. On

* John iii. 5.

† Calvin, Grotius, Piscator, &c.

‡ Matt. iii. 11.

§ John vii. 39.

the contrary, there are very strong arguments to be brought against this supposition, from the epistles of the apostle Paul. He frequently speaks of circumcision as being no longer of religious obligation. If water baptism was to have been its substitute, occasion then to mention it was almost necessary and unavoidable. Yet he is not only silent on the subject of water baptism, as the substitute of circumcision; but he even shows what is its substitute. "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God."* In the epistle to the Galatians, the apostle writes much on the subject of circumcision; but never mentions any other substitute for it, than "Faith which worketh by love," and, a "new creature."†

What has been said respecting water baptism, is intended to apply to it, as it was originally administered by immersion; and in which manner, I conceive, if it be of religious obligation, it can only be rightly administered. But it is a singular fact, that by far the greater number of the advocates for water baptism, and those who are most apt to reflect on us for laying it aside, never practise it themselves;

* Rom. ii. 28, 29.

† Gal. v. 6., vi. 15.

but have substituted for it, the sprinkling of a little water in the face of the person pretended to be baptized; and this they apply to infants more than to adults. Now this I think may, with confidence, be asserted, that sprinkling is not baptism; but, if it must have a name of Greek derivation, should be called Rantism. Besides, it is a ceremony which has neither precept nor example in the Holy Scriptures; the few arguments for it being drawn from equivocal suppositions. For any, therefore, to censure us for the disuse of water baptism, who have themselves laid aside the use of it, and substituted something else in its stead, is not a little extraordinary. Which way soever it is administered, it may be an innocent ceremony to those who consider it as a religious duty.

But, although the baptizing or sprinkling of infants may be innocent in itself, there are some circumstances attending its administration, at least in the Church of England, which may be seriously injurious. To say after a child has passed this ceremony: "We yield Thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father! that it hath pleased Thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit; to receive him for thy own child by adoption; and to incorporate him into thy holy Church:"—is saying what, I think, neither reason nor revelation will support; and, if it is seriously believed, must lead those who have passed through the ceremony, when they arrive

at years of consideration, to a very mistaken apprehension of their own state.

Another part of this ceremony, and which results from administering it to infants, appears to me very objectionable. That to which I allude is, the engagement which those enter into, who become sureties for baptized children. In performing this ceremony, the priest says: "This infant must also faithfully, for his part, promise by you that are his sureties, (until he come of age to take it upon himself,) that he will renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God's Holy Word, and obediently keep his commandments. I demand, therefore, Dost thou, in the name of this child, renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all the covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow nor be led by them? Answer.—I renounce them all." Now I appeal to those who are well acquainted with this practice, whether they who thus engage, do really perform their engagement. Does it clearly appear (as it certainly ought) that they always intend so to do when they make it? Is their own conduct such as corresponds with the engagement into which they have entered? And do they afterwards follow up this engagement by means adapted to the end? Or, is not this solemn covenant, which is attended with the most

solemn circumstances, often lightly entered into and as lightly violated? Let those who are promoting a practice, involving in it a conduct so repugnant both to religion and morality, seriously consider what they are doing; and then I believe they will see this practice in an awful point of view; and not be very censorious on us, for laying aside a ceremony, which, we think we have good reason to believe, is not an essential part of Christianity; and of which their own practice abundantly convinces us, that the abuse greatly exceeds the use.

We are, however, sensible, that the abuse of any thing in itself good and necessary, is not a sufficient reason for its disuse; nor do we rest our arguments upon it. It is now left to the serious consideration of the reader, whether water baptism can be considered as an essential of Christianity; or, whether it may not be regarded as one of those “divers washings,” which were imposed for a time only; and which were gradually to vanish away and cease: “Christ being come, a High Priest of good things to come—by his own blood entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us;* thus “blotting out the hand writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us; He took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” †

* Heb. ix. 11, 12.

† Col. ii. 14.

After what has been said on the subject of religious ceremonies in general, and on baptism in particular, it may not be necessary to add much on what is called the Lord's Supper. We admit that a ceremony, under this name, was in use in the primitive Church; and most probably arose from the circumstances which occurred when our blessed Lord ate the last passover with his disciples; but we do not think that, thence, an obligation arises upon Christians in general, to retain this ceremony. It was, like baptism, derived from a Jewish custom; and when this Dispensation was about to be superseded by that of the Gospel, it appears, as has already been observed, that this change was gradual, and the former Dispensation was not wholly laid aside at once. Admitting, therefore, as we do, all the circumstances related on this subject, we cannot conceive, that a recommendation by Christ to his most intimate friends and immediate followers, that in future, when they kept the passover, they should have their dear Lord and Master particularly in remembrance, does constitute an obligation upon all those, who should hereafter believe on his Name. To desire them to eat that bread and drink that cup in remembrance of Him, with this addition, "as oft as ye drink it,"* is, we believe, a very

* 1 Cor. xi. 25.

insufficient foundation for the superstructure which has been raised upon it.

It has already been remarked, that the washing of one another's feet was strongly recommended by our blessed Lord; and might, with at least equal propriety, be now enjoined as a religious obligation on Christians. It may be remembered, that our Lord, having washed the feet of his disciples, afterwards addressed them in this manner: "Know ye what I have done unto you? Ye call me Master and Lord, and so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet: for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."* Can any thing so clear, or so positive, be produced in favour of the Lord's Supper, or even of water baptism? Nevertheless, we do not hear of this practice, thus plainly enjoined, being recommended at this day, at least by Protestants, as a Christian duty. And why? Because it is considered, as we consider the others, of a local or temporary nature. If a church, or a congregation of Christians, can, in one case, dispense with the use of a religious ceremony, it certainly has the same right to do so in another.

The washing of the feet was a mark of humility, as the supper was of love; and where

* John xiii. 12—15.

the thing signified is felt and acted upon, the emblem may, in our apprehension, be either used or disused, as Christians may consider most conducive to the real advantage of the Church. We believe, however, that retaining these ceremonies has, in general, a tendency to settle the minds of the professors of Christianity in unnecessary forms; and to prevent their aspiring sufficiently after the practice of real and vital Christianity. The importance attached to this ceremony, we conceive, justifies our apprehensions in this respect; and the abuse which frequently attends its administration, must, we think, in this case, as in that of baptism, greatly exceed its use. We doubt not the sincerity and piety, with which this ceremony is frequently administered and received; yet we believe, that the true Lord's Supper requires no such elementary mediums as bread and wine for its participation; but that it is the same, and the qualification to receive it the same, as is pointed out by this language to one of the churches: "Behold! I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."* The experience of this inward communion, this spiritual participation of the Lord's Supper, is that which we desire to promote among the

* Rev. iii. 20.

professors of Christianity; believing with the apostle, that “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost: for he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men.”*

Our dissent from the generality of Christians, on the subjects of water baptism and the supper, and our disuse of these and other ceremonies, have, however, brought upon us much censure from some of our fellow Christians; who have even denied us a right to that name, conceiving that we could not be sincere believers in Christ. But our disuse of these ceremonies, is so far from proceeding from any inferior views of Christianity, that it arises from our very high opinion of it: on which ground we cannot reconcile these external rites to the great object, and particularly to the spirituality of the Gospel Dispensation. We believe in Christ Jesus the Saviour of men; we believe that He “washed us from our sins in his own blood;” † that He is “our Passover, who is sacrificed for us;” ‡ and that He has “abolished in his flesh, the enmity, even the law of commandments, contained in ordinances:—for through Him we have access, by one Spirit, unto the Father.”§

* Rom. xiv. 17, 18. † Rev. i. 5. ‡ 1 Cor. v. 7.

§ Eph. ii. 15, 18.

Chapter VIII.

ON THE RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE OF DAYS AND TIMES.

Exemption from censure claimed for their non-observance.—

The observance of them disapproved by the apostle Paul.—

More injurious than beneficial to religion—especially Festivals.—Setting apart one day in the week approved.—

On public fasts, &c.—Conclusion from Rom. xiv. 5, &c.

OUR disuse of the religious observance of Days and Times, is generally known; and we trust that, both on this and the preceding subject, we may claim that exemption from censure, which the apostle granted to the Church at Colosse: "Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." *

By the Law of Moses, many days and times were set apart, for the commemoration of various extraordinary circumstances, and for other considerations connected with that Dispensation. Some of these were, for a time, observed by the primitive Christians, especially by the Jewish converts; whose attachment to their Law, as is already remarked, not only induced them to retain many of its ceremonies,

* Col. ii. 16, &c.

but also to endeavour to impose them on the gentile Christians. This the apostle Paul was particularly concerned to break through, and to assert the freedom of the Gospel Dispensation, from the obligation of these legal observances; and, though he wished the believers not to judge one another, either for observing, or not observing days and times: yet he could not but consider it an unfavourable symptom in the Galatians, that they should, after having laid them aside, return to the observance of them: “How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years: I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.” *

Unless those who are in this practice, can prove some command or injunction for it in the New Testament, of which I know not any, I conceive but little more need be said on this subject. If any think the observance tends to promote piety and virtue, we would not judge those who are inclined to make this use of it; but I apprehend it is a fact of too much public notoriety not to be acknowledged, that observances of this kind, particularly the festivals, are in general so conducted as to promote dissipation and intemperance, much

* Gal. iv. 9, 10, 11.

more than piety and virtue ; and, therefore, in every point of view, we think we are well warranted in laying such observations aside.

We however consider the setting apart of one day in seven for cessation from business, and for religious services, no more than a reasonable duty : and we encourage the observance of it among our members. It has been our practice from the commencement of our religious Society ; and, although we do not consider the First, or any day of the week, as possessing a superior degree of holiness ; yet we believe considerable advantages to religion and virtue arise, not only from a proper dedication and employment of it ; but even from the imperfect observance, with which it is on the whole regarded.

We are also sensible, that the duties of humiliation and thanksgiving are frequently incumbent upon us ; yet, from the conviction that the qualification to perform these duties, should proceed from a higher source than man, we do not consider it right to unite with those who set apart particular times, and adopt set forms, for these purposes. Besides this general reason, the occasion is often such as we can, by no means join with. When war, or the successes or defeats attendant upon it, are the occasion of public thanksgiving or humiliation, our sentiments on the inconsistency of war with the spirit of Christianity, prevent our

uniting in prayer or praises for victories, which involve the destruction of our fellow-creatures : and by which, there is too much reason to fear, many souls are sent unprepared into an awful eternity. By joining on these occasions, we conceive that we should act inconsistently with that peaceable spirit, which our blessed Lord has so strongly inculcated ; and which will be more particularly treated of in the following chapter.

After giving these reasons for our dissent on this subject, I shall conclude with the words of the apostle Paul : “ One man esteemeth one day above another ; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it to the Lord ; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it.” * “ Let us not therefore judge one another any more : but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother’s way.” †

* Rom xiv. 5, 6.

† Rom. xiv. 13.

Chapter VIII.

ON OATHS AND WAR.

Quotations from Matt. v.—Oaths unnecessary.—Arguments in favour of them answered.—Arguments in favour of War answered.—The Christian Religion the only remedy for this evil.

“YE have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself; but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool:—But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil.—Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.”*

* Matt. v. 33—39, 43—45.

After reciting these strong and unequivocal injunctions of our Divine Master, I have paused to consider, whether I should say a word more on the subject of them; their own force and perspicuity seeming to require no comment. I shall therefore make none upon them; but, after saying, that on these and other similar passages in the Scriptures, we ground our testimony against oaths and war, shall proceed to consider the objections that are made, to the adoption of precepts so clearly conveyed to us, and the practice of which would be attended with so many benefits to mankind.

With respect to oaths, the apparent necessity of them is so small, and their real injury is so great, by profaning the Sacred Name, that, it is presumed, very few religiously minded people will be disposed to plead in their favour: and indeed, it appears to me difficult to find an objection of any importance, to laying them wholly aside.

The principal arguments used by those who are disposed to plead for them, must however be considered. One of these is, that the Almighty is sometimes said, in Scripture, to make use of an oath. To this it may be answered, that the Almighty could not swear as man swears, there being none greater than Himself to whom He could appeal; or to whom He was amenable for the truth of his declaration. Besides which, we apprehend,

that what He might do, as Sovereign Lord, may not be proper for us to do as dependent creatures, whose highest perfection is obedience to His will; and this will being expressly revealed to us in this instance by his beloved Son, our obvious duty is to comply with it.

Another argument in favour of swearing before magistrates, is advanced from the circumstance of our Lord's being silent before the high priest, until he adjured Him by the Living God. That the high priest intended formally to administer a judicial oath to our Saviour, is what, I apprehend, the context will not support. It rather appears, that Caiaphas, being irritated by our Lord's silence, made use of this expression in the violence of his temper, and not in a judicial capacity; and, until the latter can be proved, our Lord's simple reply, "Thou hast said,"* in no degree partakes of the nature of an oath.

A third argument in favour of the use of oaths, is drawn from some expressions of the apostle Paul; as, "God is my witness;" † "I charge thee before God," ‡ &c. These, and other similar expressions, do not, however, appear to constitute an oath; nor would they be admitted as such in a court of judicature. In the beginning of our Society, such expressions were sometimes offered to magistrates

* Matt. xxvi. 64. † Rom. i. 9. ‡ 2 Tim. iv. 1.

instead of an oath, but always refused.* Besides, if these words of the apostle are to be considered as oaths, they would prove too much, by shewing that he used them in private correspondence, or communication; which those who plead for judicial swearing, agree our Lord meant to prohibit, by the command: "Swear not at all."

Some have also argued in favour of judicial swearing, from an allusion to it in the epistle to the Hebrews, *chap.* vi, 16. But surely the incidental mention of a general practice among "men" is not a sufficient argument for the rectitude of that practice: nor a proof that it was allowed by Christians, who, in comparison with the rest of mankind, were then few in number.

It may perhaps be still argued, that the ends of justice could not be answered without an oath. To this it may be replied, that if the same penalty were annexed to a false affirmation as to a false oath, those whose consciences are not sufficiently tender to preserve them from giving a false affirmation, would find in the penalty, as much terror from offending against the one, as against the other.

It has been alleged by some, that this prohi-

* The first affirmation granted to our Society instead of an oath, was a declaration "In the presence of Almighty God." But this not affording universal relief, the legislature afterwards indulged us with the present form of attestation, in which there is no use of the Sacred Name.

bition of oaths relates only to common conversation : but the context will by no means support this construction, as will appear from the following considerations. First, profane swearing was prohibited under the Law, and it is evident that Christ was forbidding what the Law had allowed. Secondly, Swearing is here contrasted with forswearing or false swearing. Now, this being contrary to the Law, whether before a magistrate, or in private conversation, the command not to swear at all must be equally extensive. Our construction of the command of Christ, is further confirmed by the exhortation of his disciple and apostle, James : "Above all things, my brethren, swear not ; neither by heaven, neither by earth, neither by *any other oath* : but let your yea be yea, and your nay nay ; lest you fall into condemnation." *

Having said what appears to be sufficient on the subject of oaths, we come next to consider the argument used in defence of war. Of these the principal one is, that it is unavoidable and necessary. In reply to this we say, that so long as mankind are disposed to live under the influence of their passions, and to sacrifice their dearest interests to their avarice or their ambition, this plea will not be wanting. But let us consider what proofs have been given, that war is really unavoidable. Has any nation fairly

* James, v. 12.

made the experiment, and failed? Where is the country that has regulated its conduct by that justice, that liberality, that love, that humility, and that meekness, which Christianity requires, and yet has found war unavoidable? Can we contemplate the characters of the individuals who have been the rulers of nations, and say, that such have been the dispositions which regulated their public and private conduct; and that still they have not been able to preserve their country from war and bloodshed? Till all this can be clearly proved, the argument from necessity is of no weight.

If, then, it cannot be shewn that men living and acting in a truly Christian Spirit, have found war to be necessary and unavoidable, the argument assumed must be considered as destitute of foundation. But that I may not be thought to reason chimerically, I shall shew that a people have existed, who, acting upon these Christian principles, preserved their country from war and bloodshed, even while their neighbours were frequently involved in them. Pennsylvania, it is generally known, was originally the property of one called a Quaker, who filled most of the offices of the government with persons of his own persuasion. Had not the conduct of this people towards their neighbours, both Indians and Europeans, been recorded by men totally unconnected with the Society, my relation might appear partial and

interested; but history, impartial history, has transmitted the conduct of this people to posterity, in such a manner as renders it unnecessary for me to say more, than that, so long as they retained their ascendancy in the state, which was about sixty or seventy years, neither internal nor external war was permitted to disturb their peaceful habitations.* We do not say that occasions of difference never occurred: but other means of settling their differences, than those generally resorted to, were pursued: and, if not found successful, submission was wisely preferred to the precarious and violent decision of the sword.

Great pains are taken to make a distinction between offensive and defensive war; and, whilst the former is generally reprobated, the latter meets with many advocates. It must I suppose be admitted, that in almost every war both parties profess to act on the principle of defence; and where is the criterion which accurately determines the difference? But, supposing an extreme case, and that without any provocation, one man, or one nation is attacked by another, is there no dependence to be placed on a superintending Providence? and have religion and virtue no resources, but in the arm of flesh?

* In corroboration of these circumstances, the following quotation is given from the translation of a Latin Poem, entitled, "*Descriptio Pennsylvaniae*," and written in 1729, by Thomas Makin, after forty years' residence in Pennsylvania.

Were our minds brought into a true Christian state, the protection of Divine Providence would be humbly and safely relied upon; so far at least, as to prevent us from seeking redress, by means destructive of the lives of our fellow-creatures.

Such is the natural state of mankind, that "offences must needs come;" but it ought to be remembered, "that wo is to him by whom the offence cometh." Were these dispositions recommended by our blessed Lord, cherished by that which considers itself the offended party, it would soon appear, that war is not so necessary and unavoidable, as is by many imagined.

"On just and fairest terms the land is gained,
No force of arms has any right obtained;
'Tis here, without the use of arms, alone,
The best inhabitant enjoys his own.
Here many, to their wish, in peace enjoy
Their happy lots, and nothing doth annoy,
But sad New England's different conduct shews,
What dire effect from injured Indians flows." *

If sound policy were adopted, it would unite with true Christianity, in eradicating this distressing evil. Can any thing in this world compensate for the desolation and misery, which war occasions in the earth? to the loss of life and property, with almost all worldly comforts, let us add the still more important loss, which religion and virtue sustain, from a state of war, and from the military life in general: will it not

* See Proud's history of Pennsylvania, page 211—Note.

then be difficult to conceive, how men, who really have what they think, the good of their country at heart, and who also consider themselves entitled to the denomination of Christians, can promote a practice which is productive of so many evils, both natural and moral? In contemplating this distressing subject, we find it necessary to have recourse to that Christian charity, which is our duty to extend to those, who differ from us in principle and practice.* I wish, however, for myself and my fellow professors, that we may faithfully maintain our principles on this subject: being at the same time careful to support the doctrine of peace in the spirit of peace: then we may be made instrumental in promoting the increase of the government of the Son of God, whose introduction into this world was announced by an angel, accompanied with a "multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth Peace, Good-will towards men."†

There are a few arguments brought forward in favour of war, from some passages in the New

* Our excellent apologist, R. Barclay, manifests the liberality of his mind on this subject, when after arguing, with his usual ability, in favour of our principle against war, he admits that the practice of non-resistance is the most perfect part of the Christian religion, and makes considerable allowances for those who differ from us on this occasion. — See Prop. xv., close of Sec. 15.

† Luke ii. 13, 14.

Testament, which it will be proper to consider. Of these the principle one is, the expression of our Lord to his disciples: "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one." * This passage is generally considered to be of doubtful signification; and some who do not agree with us in our sentiments on war, consider this expression of our Lord as allegorical, † When the disciples replied: "Here are two swords," He gave this short answer: "It is enough." ‡ This seems to imply that they did not understand this meaning; for if He had intended the external sword, how could two be sufficient for the number of the disciples, and at a time when they were about to be attacked by the multitude, that came out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? But what seems clearly to shew, that our Saviour did not intend to recommend the use of the sword in a literal sense, is the circumstance which occurred very soon after He had used the expression under consideration: for we find, that when Peter, on the very same day, made use of a sword in defence of his Master, he was reprov'd by Him in this manner: "Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword." § It may also be

* See Luke xxii. 36.

† See Dr. Edwards on the Style, &c. of the Scriptures, page 126.

‡ Luke xxii. 38.

§ Matt. xxvi. 52.

added, that it was on the same, or the succeeding day, that our Lord said to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews." * Now, when these important and concurring circumstances are considered, can it be supposed, that our Lord intended to recommend to his disciples the use of the sword, either in defence of Him or themselves, or on any other occasion?

Another circumstance brought forward as an argument in favour of war, is the conversion of Cornelius, a centurion in the Roman army, and no account given of his having relinquished a military life. † As we have not any further account of this pious centurion, than that of his conversion, and the circumstances attending it, no argument of any weight can be drawn from this relation. Some ancient writers inform us, that the primitive Christians did not fight; and we may therefore reasonably suppose, that if the centurion continued firm in his attachment to the Christian religion, he abandoned his military life. At any rate, the silence of the Sacred historian cannot, with propriety, be brought forward as an argument in support

* John xviii. 36.

† Acts x. The remarks on this case apply to that of the centurion mentioned Matt. viii. 5.

of war; or as showing it to be consistent with the Christian Dispensation.

It is further argued, that the expression of the apostle Paul, who says respecting the magistrate: "He beareth not the sword in vain,"* is an implied acknowledgement of the propriety of using the sword in a military manner. This argument, I conceive, arises from a misapplication of the passage. The sword here alluded to, we have reason to suppose, was only an emblem of civil power. We are informed, that one of the chief magistrates in Rome (and it is to the Romans the apostle used this expression) had a sword hung up in his court, as an emblem of his power;† and we know that in this country, especially in corporate towns, the chief magistrates have a sword borne before them on particular occasions, as an emblem of office. But if the sword was even used in the punishment of offenders, it would be no fair argument in favour of using it for the purposes of war, and those devastations attendant on this lamentable evil.

These, and such as these, are the arguments advanced by many, in support of an evil, which, in its consequences, shocks humanity, destroys morality, weakens the influence of religion, and entails on mankind miseries

* Rom. xiii. 4. † Goodwin's Roman Antiquities, page 164.

incalculable and indescribable. Was the ingenuity of man as much exercised to put an end to this calamity, as his ambition is to support it, we should soon find the benefits resulting from this disposition. But it is religion, it is the Christian religion, which alone provides an adequate remedy for this malignant disorder; and when mankind are willing to receive it, in the purity, the love, the meekness, and the humility, which its Divine Author inculcated this, with other similar predictions respecting Him will be fulfilled: "He shall judge among the nations, and work conviction* among many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more." †

* See Lowth's Translation of Isaiah.

† Isaiah ii. 4.

Chapter II.

ON AMUSEMENTS.

General remarks on them.—Rules respecting them.—On Dancing and Music.—Necessity of properly regulating amusements for youth.—Propriety of avoiding temptation.

THE little benefit, and great injury, which attend most of those enjoyments that go under the name of Amusements, have induced us to bring them into less compass, than the generality of Christians do: not that we are averse to such relaxations from bodily or mental exercise, as become rational beings, and true Christians: but the repugnancy of a great part of those pleasures to religion and virtue, and the avidity with which they are pursued, are causes of sorrow to those who have at heart the real interests, temporal and spiritual, of their fellow-creatures.

There are three rules relating to amusements, by which our conduct should be regulated.

1.—To avoid all those which tend needlessly to oppress and injure any part of the animal creation. Of this class are cock-fighting and horse-racing: also hunting, &c. when engaged in for diversion and pleasure.

2.—To abstain from such as are connected with a spirit of hazardous enterprize; by which the property and temporal happiness of

individuals and families, are often made to depend on the most precarious circumstances; and the gain of one frequently entails misery on many. Of this class are all games in which property is staked.

3.—To avoid such as expose us to unnecessary temptations with respect to our virtue; or which dissipate the mind, so as to render a return to civil and religious duties ungrateful. Of this kind, stage entertainments are peculiarly to be avoided, with various other places of public amusement, which have a tendency to corrupt the heart, or to alienate it from the love and fear of God.

The amusements of dancing and music, we think, also come within this class. It may be alleged, that these might be practised in such a manner, as not to accord with the description given. Our Society, however, thinks it right to abstain from those amusements; both because of their frequent connexion with places and circumstances, that are highly objectionable; and because we conceive they can scarcely be entered into, without an improper employment of that time, which we are required not to waste, but to pass in fear, and to redeem.

Were our minds rightly regulated, and our affections set on things above, very little, which is called amusement, would be thought necessary for those who are arrived at mature age. With respect to young people, it peculiarly behoves

those who have the care of them, to see that such amusements only be adopted, as may not prove injurious to their religion or virtue ; but which may tend to promote their possessing a sound mind in a sound body. Were amusements thus restrained and regulated, great would be the benefit arising from such restrictions ; but when we see how ardently many, not only of the youth, but even of those who are considerably advanced in years, rush into dissipating and corrupting pleasures, it is not to be wondered at, that vice and irreligion should prevail to an alarming degree.

We ought ever to retain a sense of our own weakness, and of our aptitude to fall into temptations when they are presented to us. Were we properly concerned for our own most important interests, that of our immortal souls, this sense would lead us to avoid, and not to run into, temptation. How much those amusements are either evils themselves, or temptations to evil, it cannot be necessary to point out at large to those who exercise serious reflection. How necessary is it, therefore, to attend to the apostolic exhortation : “ See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time ; because the days are evil ! ” *

* Ephes. v. 15, 16.

Chapter Ƒ.

ON DRESS AND ADDRESS.

Our principle for regulating dress.—Scripture passages in support of it.—An objection answered.—Nonconformity to the world to be accompanied with the transformation of the mind.—Our peculiarities of address supported by reason, by propriety, and by religion.—On not taking off the hat.—Custom too much admitted in the conduct of Christians.

ON the first of these subjects, our principle is, to let decency, utility, and simplicity, be our chief guides; and not to conform to the changeable fashions of a vain and fluctuating world; though we may occasionally adopt alterations, which are convenient or useful. This is a principle, the propriety of which, I apprehend, no one will deny; and it is easy to suppose, that such a rule must make those who adopt it, generally singular in their appearance. It is not, however, for the sake of singularity, that we appear different from others; yet we have reason to believe, that even this singularity is not without its use. It is, in some respects, like a hedge about us; which, though it does not make the ground it encloses rich and fruitful, yet frequently prevents those intrusions, by which the labour of the husbandman is injured or destroyed.

The conduct which we have adopted in this

respect, is supported by many passages in Holy Writ. "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind,"* was the advice of the apostle to the Christians, who dwelt at the seat of Roman grandeur and luxury; and at a time, when this grandeur and luxury had perhaps attained to their greatest height. As the female sex has generally been accounted most prone to excesses of this kind, the apostles, in writing on this subject, have more particularly addressed their advices to them; thus says Paul: "I will that women adorn themselves with modest apparel; with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array, but, which becometh women professing godliness, with good works."† The following is extracted from the apostle Peter's advice to Christian wives: "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, or of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible; even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."‡

It has been objected to us, that we connect religion too much with dress. This, I conceive, arises from a misapprehension of our principles. We consider simplicity of apparel, and a

* Rom. xii. 2.

† Tim. ii. 9, 10.

‡ 1 Peter iii. 3, 4.

nonconformity to vain fashions, as a moral virtue, in the same manner, though not to the same degree, as we do temperance and sobriety. In these it is possible a man may be very exemplary, and yet be a stranger to true religion : but, because this man wants that which should be the moving spring of all our good actions, and, perhaps, in some other parts of conduct, is even deficient in morality, no one, surely, would recommend such a man to lay aside that part of moral conduct, which he is already in the practice of. Thus it is with our apparel. We need not lay aside what is right in one part of our practice, because we are not thought right, or do not think ourselves so in every thing. A man's pretension to religion or virtue, should not be estimated from the plainness of his dress and outward appearance, any more than from his possessing some other moral virtues, into which true religion would, no doubt, lead him.

It is, however, highly important to us, to maintain something more than the form of godliness ; and, whilst we avoid a conformity to this world, to be careful to seek after that Divine Power, which will enable us to comply with the other part of the exhortation : “ Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind ; that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.” * Thus,

* Rom. xii. 2.

having our minds and conduct rightly regulated, we shall fulfil another important apostolic injunction: "Let not then your good be evil spoken of." *

In our address also, there are some peculiarities, which it will be proper to explain; as, our using the singular number in speaking to a single person; our disuse of the appellations of master, mistress, &c. in a complimentary manner, to those who do not stand in these relations to us; and our calling the months and days of the week by their numerical names, instead of those which are derived from the heathen deities, &c. From these, and other erroneous and corrupt practices, the Spirit of Truth, in which we profess to believe, as guiding into all Truth, led our predecessors in religious profession; and, we believe, still leads us, as we faithfully follow it. Our conduct in these respects is so well supported by the practices mentioned in Holy Writ, as well as by the simplicity and reasonableness of it, that I apprehend no one will deny its propriety, even if they will not allow it to be necessary.

The origin of applying the plural number to an individual, and of giving complimentary titles to one another, will, I suppose be acknowledged by those who have traced these things to their source, to have been vanity or pride.

* Rom. xiv. 16.

Besides this consideration, our practice of using the singular number to a single person, and of calling one another by the proper name, is both more correct and more perspicuous. This is also the case with respect to our names of days and months. Nevertheless, it is not by reason and propriety alone, that our conduct in these things may be supported; nor are these the grounds of our peculiar practice. Religion, if an attention to the examples and precepts recorded in the Holy Scriptures, has a claim to the name of religion, also justifies our conduct. It was, no doubt, in allusion to the complimentary, and not the proper use, of the appellations of Rabbi, Father, and Master, that our Lord prohibited the practice among his followers. Speaking of the disposition of the Scribes and Pharisees, He says; "They love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi."* Then addressing himself to the multitude and to his disciples, He adds: "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon earth; for one is your Father which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even Christ."† The following expressions of Elihu, a pious young man mentioned

* Matt. xxiii. 6, 7.

† Matt. xxiii. 8, 9, 10.

in the book of Job, are also applicable to our present purpose: "Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person; neither let me give flattering titles unto men; for I know not to give flattering titles: in so doing, my Maker would soon take me away."*

With respect to the singular number to a single person, it is the uniform practice in the Holy Scriptures; and indeed in all other writings, to the period of time long posterior to that in which the last part of the Scriptures was written. It is not therefore, to be expected, that any allusion to a contrary practice should be mentioned in them. We think, however, that we may consider our conduct, in this respect, consistent with that "form of sound words,"† recommended by Paul to Timothy.

The giving of the names of heathen deities, &c., to days and months, is not only inconsistent with "the form of sound words" just mentioned; but also contrary to the spirit of the injunction given to the Israelites, as a preservative from contaminating themselves with idolatry: "In all things that I have said unto you, be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods; neither let it be heard out of thy mouth."‡§ It may also be remembered, that when the reformation of the Jews was foretold by the

* Job. xxxii. 21, 22. † 2 Tim. i. 13. ‡ Exodus xxiii. 13.

§ See also Deut. xii. 3. Joshua xxiii. 7. Psalm xvi. 4.

prophet, these, amongst other things, were stated as a part: "I will take the name of Baalim out of her mouth;"* "I will turn to the people a pure language"† and "I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered."‡

There is another peculiarity in our conduct, on which it may be proper to say a few words. Our refusal to take off the hat, as a mark of respect to man, is generally known. The reason for this is, that it is a token of reverence enjoined and used, in our solemn approaches to the Supreme Being, when exercising the religious duties of preaching and prayer. On this account, and not from any disrespect to our superiors, we think it right not to confound this solemn act of reverence to the Almighty, with the marks of respect to our fellow creatures. True civility and due respect may be better shown by conduct, than by compliment: and we are far from desiring to dismiss those social duties from our attention and regard.

Many are apt to plead general custom as a

* Hosea ii. 17.

† Zephaniah iii. 9.

‡ Zechariah xiii. 2. The following lines are not inapplicable to this subject:—

"The Pagan page how far more wise than our's!
They with the gods they worship'd graced their song:
Our songs we grace with gods we disbelieve;
Retain the manners, but reject the creed."

HANNAH MORE.

sanction to practices, which, were they impartially examined, would be acknowledged to be erroneous and improper: and it is to be regretted, that the professors of Christianity should retain so much that is inconsistent with its purity and simplicity. If these things cannot be styled “the weightier matters of the Law,”* and we allow they cannot, yet, we believe, they may be considered as the externals of religion, and as things which we “ought not to leave undone.”

* Matt. xxiii. 23.

Chapter XX.

ON CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

Peaceableness of our principles a security to Government.— Duties of subjects.—Suffering peaceably submitted to, when active compliance cannot be conscientiously rendered.— Civil and religious liberty valued, and how best defended.

THE peaceableness of our principles, when applied even to our enemies, affords a strong security to any government under which we live, that we cannot unite in any practices, with a view either to injure or subvert it. The consideration of this circumstance, attended with a correspondent conduct, has probably been the means of obtaining indulgences for some of our principles, which are contrary to general laws. Several of these principles are such, as generally to exclude us from becoming a constituent part of government: what we have, therefore, to consider, are the duties of subjects.

These duties are clearly defined in the New Testament; and under circumstances which render this definition peculiarly strong. When they were enjoined, the primitive Christians were frequently under persecution; the government, at that time, was of a kind which is generally considered the worst, and in the hands of the worst of men; nevertheless, we see no encouragement given to any thing like

sedition or resistance. On the contrary, the believers in Christ were taught to “be subject unto the higher powers,” * “to obey magistrates,” † and to “submit to every ordinance of man, for the Lord’s sake.—As free, and not using liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.” ‡ These are the principles on which our Society, as a body, have uniformly acted; as may be seen by the advices given on this subject, in a Book of Extracts from advices of the Yearly meeting, printed in London, in the year 1802. From page 19 of this book, the following advice is taken: “We trust we are called to shew forth to the world, in life and practice, that the blessed reign of the Messiah the Prince of Peace, is begun; and we doubt not but it will proceed, till it attain its completion in the earth: when, according to the prophecies of Isaiah and Micah, ‘nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more.’ Influenced by these principles, we cannot consistently join with such as form combinations of a hostile nature against any; much less in opposition to those placed in sovereign or subordinate authority: nor can we unite with or encourage, such as revile and asperse them; for it is written: ‘Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.’”—*Yearly Meeting’s Printed Epistle*, 1775.

* Rom. xiii. 1.

† Titus iii. 1.

‡ 1 Pet. ii. 13, 16.

But whilst we think it right to put in practice the advices given to the primitive Christians on this subject, we are, as they were, under circumstances which sometimes prevent us from actively complying with what the laws of the country require. Nevertheless, we submit to the law, by suffering the peaceable execution of it, in cases in which we cannot actively comply. There are duties which we owe to our consciences and to God, with which human power cannot dispense, and of which it is not a competent judge. The government of conscience is God's prerogative; and when it is neither used as a cloak of maliciousness, nor abused to the disturbance of the public peace, it ought to be fully free. Our Society in this country, though under some circumstances which bear rather hard upon it, has abundant cause for gratitude to the government, for the favours we enjoy; and it is to be hoped, that we shall always conduct ourselves so as to merit the continuance, and even the extension of them: "being obliged, not only to demean ourselves as a grateful people, but, as a Christian society, to live peaceably and inoffensively under the present government; as we have always done, under the various revolutions of government, ever since we were a people."—*Yearly Meeting's Written Epistle*, 1692.

But, notwithstanding our peaceable and submissive principles, in relation to those who

are placed in authority over us, we are far from being insensible of the value of civil and religious liberty. When these are violated, we think it right to represent our grievances to those who oppress us, or who have it in their power to afford relief. If this were done in a Christian spirit, and in a language respectfully strong, it would be found, in general, a much more successful, and always a more proper means of obtaining redress, than any seditious and turbulent proceedings, or those bloody appeals to the sword, to which mankind are too apt to resort, as the relief of oppression or the gratification of revenge.

Chapter XXX.

ON DISCIPLINE.

The necessity of discipline in religious societies.—Objections to it answered. — Particular objects of our discipline enumerated. — Different meetings in which it is transacted.— Importance of transacting it in a right spirit.

WHATEVER may be the inducement of any people to form themselves into a separate society, it must be on some principles which they assume, and on the preservation of which, their continuance as a particular society, must in a great measure depend. It is also the duty of every society formed on religious principles, to support good morals; without which its pretensions to religion are vain. These two considerations render Discipline, in a religious society, necessary to its reputable existence; and when they are not attended to, confusion and disgrace must follow. However excellent any of our religious principles may be, we who profess them are all frail and fallible. We are all by nature prone to evil: and if we have even experienced some degree of redemption from the state of fallen nature, we are still liable, without watchfulness, to fall or to be drawn aside in principle or practice. Hence we find, in all religious societies, those who are a discredit to their profession; and we are far from

considering ourselves free from such disreputable members. But in order to remedy this evil as much as possible, we have a discipline established among us ; the first object of which is, to labour in gospel love and by private advice, for the reformation of those who walk disorderly; and if this cannot be effected, and the nature of the case require it, to disown such persons as members of our Society. The reasonableness of this discipline appears so evident, that it may seem unnecessary to enter into further arguments in favour of its propriety and utility; yet, as objections are advanced against our practice in this respect, it may be proper to take some notice of them.

The objections commonly advanced against the exercise of discipline, are, *first*, that it lays an unnecessary restraint on private judgment; *secondly*, that it interferes with that attention to the dictates of the Spirit, to which we are individually recommended; and, *thirdly*, that the disowning of members is a species of persecution.

The necessity of discipline for the constitution and support of any religious society, has already been stated, so as, in a great measure, to obviate the first objection. It may however be proper to add, that in every society, civil or religious, submission to the regulations of that society is necessary, in order to prevent the licentiousness and confusion that would follow, if every member acted upon his own ideas,

without any external restriction. If this be applicable to society in general, it is particularly so with regard to those religious societies, which have separated from all others, on account of opinions and practices that appear to them not consistent with the nature of true religion, or unnecessarily attached to it. How shall a society retain its existence with any degree of propriety, if those who depart from or disavow its principles, are to remain members of it? And how shall such a society be known to the world, if its members are permitted to profess and act differently, even on subjects which at first formed the foundation of their union?

It has been said, that nothing except immorality and the fundamentals of religion, should be the subject of discipline. But, if we could be all of one mind on the application of the word immorality, we should find it very difficult to agree on the fundamentals of religion; and the number of persons is, perhaps not small, who would resolve these fundamentals into a belief of a God, and of the immortality of the soul. We may easily consider what a strange medley, the liberty contended for would admit into one society. The Jew, the Christian, the Mahomedan, and the Heathen, with their various subdivisions, might all be blended together in one body; in which we may suppose, if any right zeal for their respective religious sentiments should exist, there

would be perpetual jarring and discord. Much more conducive is it to the peace of religious societies, that each should consistently maintain its own principles, and either suffer those who dissent from them quietly to withdraw ; or, after proper labour and waiting for restoration, to disown them as acknowledged members of the society. When this is done, as it ought to be, in a right spirit, it is no violation of true charity, nor of that liberty which all have, no doubt, a right to exercise with respect to private opinion.

The second objection is often urged in a manner, which may tend to mislead and captivate the unwary ; but it proceeds on a supposition, which is by no means admissible, namely, that a body of Christians, united in the belief of certain principles, is more likely to be misled, than some of the individuals constituting that body. It has always been the judgment of our Society, that the establishment of meetings for discipline was under the same Divine Influence, which originally formed our predecessors a distinct people. The subjects of the care of these meetings have varied very little from their first institution ; and, therefore, for any person now to pretend, that this discipline is an improper restraint on the leadings of the Spirit, so far as respects them, is to say, in effect, that they are not led by the same Spirit in which the Society professes to believe, and

by which it desires ever to be led. "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets;" * and the individuals of a religious society must be subject to that society collectively; otherwise anarchy and confusion will ensue: and when it is considered that in our Society, a much greater proportion of its members concur in forming its rules, than in any other, there seems no room left for objections like this. They might have a more specious appearance, if the power of making rules and regulations were lodged in a few individuals: though, even in this case, they would be destitute of solidity, if the individuals were properly delegated.

The comparison between persecution and the disownment of the members of a religious society, has been often zealously urged, by some of the advocates for unrestrained liberty of sentiment. To draw this comparison the stronger with respect to our Society, it has been urged, that they who are deprived of membership with us, lose not only the common privileges of membership, but, if reduced to poverty, are deprived of that provision for which the Society is peculiarly distinguished. But this argument, by proving too much, proves nothing: for even these latitudinarians would, I suppose, think it right to disown a

* 1 Cor. xiv. 32.

member for idolatry or atheism; and yet on such an one, it would not be proper to inflict what may be termed persecution. But are we, because we make extraordinary provision for our poor, to retain all that have been members, however they may differ from us in principle or practice? The absurdity of the argument appears to me too great to need further confutation. What is sometimes advanced with respect to degradation of character by disownment, it is apprehended, stands or falls with the former. If the Society has, by its general good conduct, obtained such a degree of reputation, that those who are disowned by it, lose part of the good opinion of the public; must it sacrifice that reputation, by retaining in its bosom, those who violate its rules or trample upon its principles:—principles, for the support of which, our predecessors in religious profession, were willing to suffer such ignominy; with the loss of property, of liberty, or even of life itself?

Besides a general oversight of the conduct and conversation of our members, there are other objects which obtain attention in our meetings for discipline. One of the most material of these is, the support of the poor: for it has been the practice in our Society, from its first establishment, to maintain our own poor, and not give them occasion to apply for the common modes of relief. Notwithstanding

this, we think it right to contribute to the support of the poor who are not of our Society, in common with our neighbours: and that, not only in cases where the law obliges us, but also, when ability is afforded, in those voluntary charities which are established, or occasionally promoted, for the benefit of this part of the community: a class, to the suitable relief and employment of which, much importance is very properly attached.

Another material object in our meetings for discipline, is, due attention to proceedings in relation to marriage; to take care that the parties are clear of other engagements of the same kind; that they are not within disallowed degrees of consanguinity; and that, in case of previous marriage, the rights of former children be properly secured: after which, care is also exercised, that the marriage be concluded in a proper and becoming manner.

The register of these marriages — of births and burials — the care of our meeting-houses and burial-grounds — the admission of members — the granting and receiving of certificates for those who remove from one district to another — the sufferings of our members on account of ecclesiastical and military demands,* with divers

* It may be proper here to remove a prevailing impression, that the amount of these sufferings is reimbursed to the sufferers. We not only have no funds for this purpose; but such a practice does not, nor ever did, exist in our Society.

other matters ; are also subjects of our care in these meetings.

The meetings in which these matters are transacted, are called Monthly Meetings, from their being held once in every month. They send representatives, and answer queries relative to the general conduct of their members, to other meetings, which are called Quarterly Meetings ; the principal business of which is, to superintend Monthly meetings, and to advise and assist them when occasion may require. These Quarterly Meetings also send representatives, and answer queries to a meeting which is called the Yearly Meeting. This Meeting has a general oversight of the Society, and makes rules for its government and welfare.

This description of our meetings for discipline is intended to apply only to the men's meetings: the women also have their Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly Meetings ; in which they attend to the wants of their own sex, and exercise a care over their conduct ; but have no power of dismemberment.

The importance of transacting this discipline in a right spirit, and by those who may be properly qualified, has ever been felt as of no small importance to its right preservation ; and many are the advices, which have been issued by the Yearly Meeting, on this subject. The following being short and comprehensive, will, I apprehend, afford an instructive description of our

concern in this respect: "We tenderly exhort, that in all your meetings for the discipline of the Church, you wait in humility, to have your spirits brought into subjection to the Spirit of Christ; in which work all who are engaged should be men of upright hearts and clean hands, rightly prepared for the service they undertake." 1743.

Chapter FHH.

THE CONCLUSION.

Address to the Youth, on the Remembrance of their Creator.—Reason and Revelation.—The Holy Scriptures and Christianity.—On our peculiar principles.—On the necessity of regeneration.—Address to persons not of our religious persuasion.

IN the design and execution of this work, my mind has been much influenced by a desire for the welfare of the youth in our Society, and for their instruction in the principles of true religion. To them I feel disposed to address myself in this conclusion.

Let me remind you, my dear friends, of that wise and pious injunction: “Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.”* Consider his operations in nature and in grace; in Providence and Redemption. Although in the consideration of all these, some difficulties not easily comprehended, may present themselves; yet so much will be opened to the humble and attentive mind, as will excite the love and fear of Him, “who made the heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is.”† In entering into these considerations, there are two assistants afforded us, by our gracious Creator—Reason

* Eccles. xii. 1.

† Psalm cxlvi. 6.

and Revelation. The former, as well as the latter, is useful on this occasion. It is a faculty given us by God; and, if rightly exercised, will tend to promote our knowledge of Him, particularly in the works of creation and nature. When not misled by the vanity of the human heart, reason sees and feels its own imperfection; and readily embraces and submits to those advantages, which Revelation affords. By Revelation, I mean to comprehend both that which is mediate, and that which is immediate. The former is communicated in the Holy Scriptures, in which we have very ample accounts of the being and nature of God; of his manifold works in Creation and Providence; of his love to mankind, particularly in the work of redemption by Christ; and in affording the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to guide and direct into all necessary truth. It is by this Spirit, which is called the Spirit of God and of Christ, as proceeding from the Father and the Son, that Immediate Revelation is received. This Revelation produces that knowledge of God and of Christ, on which eternal life depends. In this sense, "no man knoweth who the Father is, but the Son; and he to whom the son will reveal Him."* And when it pleases God to reveal his Son in any, and obedience is yielded to the heavenly vision,

* Luke x. 22.

these then become acquainted with the mysteries of God's kingdom; and are made sensible, that "flesh and blood hath not revealed these things unto them; but their Father which is in heaven." *

As the Holy Scriptures are the blessed means of introducing us to an acquaintance with the way of life and salvation, and of affording us much instruction in our various duties to God and one to another; I earnestly press on you, my dear young friends, a frequent and serious perusal of them. You will here find much profitable instruction of various kinds: the history is, beyond any other, important and interesting; the mystery makes "wise unto salvation." † Here you may see the various dealings of God with his creature man; you may be made acquainted with the Dispensation of the Law, the predictions of the prophets, the ministration of John, and the most glorious Dispensation of the Gospel. Beware of such publications as have a tendency to create a disrelish for these Sacred Writings. Consider what the state of our religious knowledge would have been without them; and look at those parts of the world which have not had the benefit of the Scriptures; or in which the reading of them has been greatly restrained. When this comparison is fairly made, I believe we shall find abundant

* Matt. xvi. 17.

† 2 Tim. iii. 15.

cause to be thankful to the God and Father of all our mercies, for the benefit we enjoy, in having free access to these testimonials of his ways and will respecting the children of men. Let them be fairly compared with the various systems of religion in the world; and then, although there should be some difficulties, which may not at once be fully comprehended, (and in what science are there not such difficulties?) then will the transcendent excellency of Christianity be felt and acknowledged; and gratitude will fill the heart, for the unmerited love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Having fairly appreciated the general principles of Christianity, those which are peculiar to our religious Society, and of which you make profession will, I believe, rise in your view with esteem and attachment. Their consistency with the Christian Religion has been already shown; and, presuming you to be sensible of this consistency, I affectionately entreat you to be faithful in your adherence to them. Attend to that Divine Light, that saving Grace, that good Spirit, which is placed in your hearts. This, if attended to, will preserve from the temptations incident to early life; and be your guide and support through the various trials and probations, which, now or hereafter, may be your allotment. O! my dear friends, receive this heavenly visitant in the way of his coming. Give not up your minds to the pleasures and

enjoyments of this world, which will draw away your obedient attention from things which make for true peace, and things by which you may edify one another. Be willing to take up the daily cross; and to bear the yoke of Him, who said: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." *

Let those who have been habituated to sinful or dissipating pleasures, and have afterwards been brought to taste of the good Word of Life, and the powers of the world to come; let these say, whether more of the real comforts and enjoyments of life, are not to be experienced in the humility and self-denial of a Christian, than in all the gratifications which sin and folly afford. When we take into consideration the Divine peace, which we are told, "passeth all understanding," † and a degree of which is at times the experience of the faithful followers of a crucified Lord; when we also consider the comfortable prospects of another and eternal state of existence; there will be found sufficient inducements, in every reasonable point of view, to prefer a life of religion and virtue, above that which is devoted to the indulgence and the pursuits of folly, dissipation, and sin.

The same principle of Divine Light, which

* Matt. xi. 29, 30.

† Phil. iv. 7.

led our predecessors out of the vain and sinful pleasures of the world, also let them see the corruptions which had taken place in religious worship and ministry; the inconsistency of war with the Gospel Dispensation; and the impropriety of divers other matters, in the external deportment of professing christians. For their testimony on these accounts, and the conduct consequent upon them, they suffered deeply, in an age when religious liberty was claimed by all, but was given by few or none who came into the possession of power. Read the relations of the patient sufferings for the cause of Truth, and the testimony of Jesus, of those who have gone before you;* and faithfully bear your testimony, even in those things that you may be ready to call little. Let not the singularity which a conduct consistent with your principles may produce, discourage you from a faithful adherence to them; but submit to bear that cross, which will crucify you to the world, and the world to you, and redeem you from the various corruptions with which it abounds.

The principles and practices of our Society are now, in general, so respectfully treated, that the temptation to desert them is much lessened. Prize your privileges; consider how differently

* The Author wishes to turn the attention of the youth to the Sufferings of the primitive Christians, and of the early reformers from popery, as well as to those of the members of our own Society.

our forefathers were circumstanced ; and let this consideration excite in your minds increasing faithfulness and dedication to all parts of your religious duty. Follow the example of our blessed Redeemer ; remember the reproaches which he endured ; and be willing to take up the cross and despise the shame ; then you may become partakers of that crown of righteousness, which is the reward of all who have fought the good fight, and kept the faith, and who love His appearance.

Before I conclude this address, I wish a little further to open the subject of Christian Redemption, so far at least as to turn your attention to that work, which the depraved state of human nature renders universally necessary, and in which our Lord thus instructed a ruler among the Jews : “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* Whatever our religious profession, whatever our outward appearance and demeanour may be ; all will fail to procure us Divine favour and acceptance, if the heart is not renewed after the image of Him that created us. “Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.”† This was the language in which our Saviour repeatedly inculcated this doctrine to Nicodemus ; and O ! my dear young friends ! neither marvel at it, nor withdraw from it. Examine the state of your own

* John iii. 3.

† John iii. 7.

hearts, and the occasion for it will soon be seen and felt. Dwell, therefore, I entreat you, under those Divine convictions and influences, by which “the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost”* are experienced. The work is generally slow and gradual; therefore be not discouraged if you cannot always perceive its progress; but, as you abide patiently under a right exercise of mind, you will find that the work will in time proceed, until the new creation in Christ Jesus unto good works is known. But when this is in measure attained, still watchfulness and prayer should be the companions of every mind. The command to watchfulness is of universal extent: “What I say unto you, I say unto all, watch.”† Again, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.”‡ When this disposition of mind is rightly abode in, it preserves from formality in religion; keeps the soul alive to God; and makes living members and bright examples in his Church, and among his people. In this state of religious exercise the experience of the primitive believers is attained: “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body; and made to drink into one spirit.”§ Here also right qualifications are received for religious service, and a capacity to fill up the measure of suffering or labour, which

* Titus iii. 5.

† Mark xiii. 37.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 41.

§ 1 Cor. xii. 13.

may be allotted in the Church of Christ: a Church, the members of which are thus described by an inspired apostle: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." *

As one of the objects of this publication, is to convey information to persons who are not of our religious persuasion, I request that they would follow the example of the noble Bereans, and "search the Scriptures whether those things are so," † It is not probable that we shall all be brought to think alike on these subjects; but if we can see, that so much may be said by those from whom we differ, as to produce an increase of Christian charity, something, and something important is gained. I am not a favourer to that false charity, which would destroy all religious zeal, and make all professions of religion immaterial. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind;" ‡ and, having endeavoured to obtain that persuasion from due consideration, let him support it with zeal, tempered with "the meekness of wisdom." Thus, notwithstanding the variety of opinions into which the Christian world is divided, the light of the Gospel will increase in the earth; and we may together promote the coming of that day, in which the Divine promise and prediction will be fulfilled:

* 1 Peter ii. 5.

† Acts xvii. 11.

‡ Rom. xiv. 5.

“From the rising of the sun, even to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the gentiles; and in every place, incense shall be offered unto my Name, and a pure offering.”* Then will “the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.”†

* Mal. i. 11.

† Rev. xi. 15.

It is the duty of the State to protect the rights of the citizen, and to maintain the peace and order of the community. The State is also responsible for the education of its citizens, and for the promotion of the general welfare of the people.

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Tuke, Henry

The Principles of Religion, as professed by the Society of Christians,
usually called Quakers

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